



# Weight Loss Surgery Overseas - Should you do it?





# Blame it on Television

The recent rise in reality television programmes such as Love Island, The Only Way is Essex and Ex on the Beach with their fit, toned, sculpted bodies, has resulted in a rise in numbers of people deciding that they are going to try cosmetic surgery. With a huge number of these procedures being carried out in Europe and abroad. The more 'relaxed' legislation around Health and Medical industries in certain countries allow organisations to hugely undercut UK companies.

## You will save money, but at what cost?

More recently we have seen a shift from smaller cosmetic procedures now over to more complex, and serious operations. Our Healthier Weight surgeons have recently been reporting a worrying trend - the increase in the numbers of people going overseas for weight loss surgery, with a number of them only to return home with serious complications that require long term treatment in NHS hospitals.

It may seem like the sensible thing to do from a cost perspective - with some surgery costing 50% more in the UK than other European countries - but there is always a cost, not financial all the time, but there is a good chance you will pay for it in the long term!

As one of our more experienced surgeons says...



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As a Bariatric Surgeon with a practice based in Kent, I have been exposed to a higher than normal proportion of patients who are lured by the short distance across the Channel and lower prices of Bariatric providers, specifically in Belgium. My personal experience has been of patients left with no long term follow up, some struggling in the first week postoperatively without access to their surgeon or team.

I had a gentleman who had to have his band removed 3 days following overseas surgery by the NHS due to dysphagia. He was discharged prematurely and got no response when he ran into problems. Others have been charged extra when problems develop postoperatively or if they need further interventions.

- Mr Ahmed Hamouda, Maidstone

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# So do you or don't you?

Sitting on the fence is tricky here, as everything we read and everyone we speak to urges us strongly to stay at home for surgery, but ultimately it is a decision of cost. Having said that please read this document thoroughly, as we have come up with eight compelling reasons to think again if you are considering surgery overseas:

Please follow us on Twitter or Facebook and post your thoughts, using **#overseaswls**



## 1. Absence of Indemnity Protection

If something goes wrong you will find it difficult, if not impossible, to make a claim against the overseas surgeon or hospital. In the UK you know that your surgeon is GMC registered and has insurance protection.



## 2. GP Treatment

When you have treatment overseas and do not disclose it to your GP, they are entitled to withhold future treatment.



## 5. Substandard Surgery

See Mr Kelly's and Mr Singhal's comments in this e-book. In some countries they do not operate to same high standards we do in this country.



## 4. Absence of Aftercare

Your long term success with your procedure is dependent on high quality aftercare. Anyone who has had weight loss surgery will tell you this is crucial. See the comments above from our surgeons too. All too frequently, overseas surgery packages have no aftercare. Most importantly they do not include a blood test in the first year for sleeve and bypass patients.



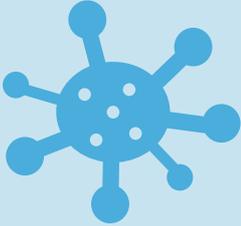
## 3. Data Security

When you book surgery outside of the EU you cannot, the strict data protection laws in this country will not apply.



## 6. Absence of registries to monitor surgeon outcomes

In the UK surgeon outcomes are monitored closely. There is a duty of candour and transparency. In many overseas countries the same standards do not apply



## 7. Infection Control

You have to ask sometimes why overseas surgery is so cheap/. Sometimes it because very low cost instruments are used. There are also countries where reusable instruments are used when in this country we use only disposable instrument sin the interests of infection control

All these reasons are important for you to think about before making what is a life-changing decision, and life-changing in many ways. Make all those positive though, as it can easily be life changing in a negative way too, surgery going wrong, months and months trying to get it sorted out, As Mr Loy puts it...



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I have looked after many patients who have returned from abroad after weight loss surgery with complications. Patients who should never have had surgery, patients with staple line leaks but most importantly patients with little or no post-op care or help. I have seen first hand the devastating effects of abandoned patients, who have no one to help them at the most important part of their weight loss journey. That's the difference having your surgery carried out by the UK trained and accredited surgeon makes.

- Mr John Loy

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We have seen first hand - across Healthier Weight the devastation this can cause individuals.



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We had a sleeve patient done in Poland. Admitted with a leak shortly after arriving back in the uk. At surgery the findings revealed only half the sleeve performed. The initial surgery had been inadequate and poorly performed. The patient made a full recovery and remains well.

- Mr Jamie Kelly, Southampton

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So, in conclusion, we are not going to sit on the fence at all. simply don't do it. If the price is a prohibitor for you, consider finance plans or delaying your surgery in the UK while you save up. We have seen too many lives ruined by botched surgery and the limited aftercare and warranties patients get, any serious problem you have no support - you will go into the NHS waiting list and not have the support of a surgeon or supporting organisation in this country.

We will finish with a quote from our Medical Director, Mr Rishi Singhal, who has had more than his fair share of trying to tidy up and fix misfortunes of patients who have tried to save money by travelling abroad.



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I treated a patient in the NHS who had gastric sleeve surgery in Turkey. It was a very sorry story. The day after her procedure a bleed was detected and they had to return to theatre. Upon returning home to the UK they immediately presented at the local NHS hospital. The bruising we found in the abdomen was quite remarkable and we were never able to establish exactly what had been attempted.

Worse was to follow as it became apparent the sleeve was too tight and the stomach was completely blocked. Nothing was passing through. This required that we fit a nasal gastric tube and the patient was fed through this for a whole 6 months. Only then was it possible to operate again and convert the sleeve to a bypass.

There are enormous risks if you choose to have your weight loss procedure done abroad. In the UK all of our surgeons have to be registered with the General Medical Council and are usually members of the British Obesity and Metabolic Surgery Society (BOMSS). However, in some centres outside the UK these accreditations may not exist.

“My recommendation to anyone considering weight loss surgery would be to have your procedure done in the UK, where you are in control of every decision, from your consultant to the hospital.

- Mr Rishi Singhal, Birmingham

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## Contact Us



0800 313 4618



[webenquiry@healthierweight.co.uk](mailto:webenquiry@healthierweight.co.uk)

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