



WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA BARIATRIC INSTITUTE

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Medical weight loss has become popular over the last few years.

People may opt to take medications for weight loss for several reasons. Most importantly, weight loss prevents and relieves chronic



medical conditions related to obesity. Weight loss medications such as the injectable forms can manage blood glucose levels with the added benefit of reducing body weight.

While medical weight loss is expanding, it is important to understand the benefits and risks associated with use.

First, patients should make an appointment with their weight management provider to review health history, voice their struggles with weight gain and review options.

Second, it is important for the patient to be educated on the medication, in terms of side effects, dosages, indications, contraindications and usage.

Third, nutrition and physical activity are crucial to successful weight loss. When solely relying on medication for weight loss, there is a potential for weight regain.

Lastly, continuing to follow with your weight management team is important to prevent serious side effects and for continued support to a healthier you.

If you are struggling with your weight, contact our clinic - Western Pennsylvania Bariatric Institute to schedule your appointment.

Jessica Custer, CRNP

Patient Spotlight

People treat her differently now. They're much more friendly; when she smiles, people smile back; and they help her to reach products on the top shelves at grocery stores.

That's something entirely new for Cali Sebak, who lost 100 pounds following a medical weight-loss plan at the Western Pennsylvania Bariatric Institute, part of the Conemaugh Health System.

"People definitely treated me differently before I lost the weight. I felt they were always judging me," said the 30-year-old Greensburg resident.

"There's a misconception that obesity is caused by laziness. People don't realize that there are extremely strong metabolic and genetic predispositions to it."

Obesity is common throughout her family, especially on her father's side.

Weighing 267 pounds caused fertility problems and prompted Cali to strongly consider surgery to lose weight. But after conferring with nurse practitioner Jessica Custer at the Bariatric Institute in 2022, she opted for a purely medical weight-loss plan, instead.

"Jess guided me through the entire successful experience," said Calie, who is 5-foot, 5-inches tall. "We discussed my desire to start a family with my husband. She recommended against surgery since it would require taking birth-control medication for several years. Jess is so knowledgeable, supportive and kind. She's simply fantastic."

After starting a series of Wegovy® weight-loss injections and following tailored nutrition and exercise plans, "I began to lose one to two pounds a week. And I felt an overall improvement in my whole well-being," she said. "Inflammation throughout my body went down, my (menstruation) cycle became regular, and my eating habits changed dramatically."

For the first time, Cali began to feel full while eating meals – rather than simply eating until the food was gone and still being hungry.



Patient Spotlight [cont.]



She gradually lost 100 pounds over 18 months. Cali shed her 3XL clothes and went from a size 24 dress to a size 10. "I was able to begin shopping in regular clothing stores, which was very exciting," said Cali, who is expecting her first child in December.

The weight loss helped her professionally, as well. As a pediatric speech-language pathologist working with autistic children, Calie constantly had to be on her toes.

"Before my weight loss, I had to rely on teacher's aides to help because I just couldn't keep up with the kids," she said. "But afterward, I'm so much more confident, and don't tire nearly as easily. I'm a lot more energetic, able to keep up and run around."

While the medical weight-loss program "is an incredible tool that has given me a happy, healthy lifestyle and transformed my quality of life," Cali advises that it involves a lot of hard work.

"It's not a quick fix. I explain to people that I didn't get a 'skinny shot.' The medication enabled my body to function the way normal people's bodies do. It got me onto an equal playing field," she said. "I was no longer fighting against my body's metabolism in addition to the exercise, tracking calories and putting in the constant effort needed to drop the weight."

"It's taken a lot of hard work and dedication. And I'm very proud of myself."

A key lesson Cali has learned is to avoid negative thoughts.

"Don't look at it as having to lose a hundred pounds. Stay focused on yourself and your well-being. Enjoy the process of slowly, but surely improving your quality of life. Now, I know how incredibly strong I am and what my body can do," she said.

"Most importantly, this is helping me to achieve my ultimate goal – being a mom. My husband and I are enjoying everyday activities and looking forward to the wonderful gift of becoming parents. All my prayers are being answered."

Healthy Recipe

Shredded Brussel Sprouts with Turkey Bacon

**THIS RECIPE MAKES
8 SERVINGS**

Prep Time: 10 minutes
Total Time: 20 minutes



INGREDIENTS

- 10 ounces Brussels sprouts
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- Kosher salt, to taste
- ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 ounces cooked turkey bacon

PREPARATION

First, shred the Brussels sprouts: Slice off woody stems and remove any tough or dried outer leaves. Then, cut each sprout in half lengthwise and thinly slice from root to top. Gently tease apart the layers.

Heat skillet over medium heat and add canola oil. Sauté shredded Brussels sprouts with garlic powder, onion powder, and salt & pepper to taste. After they're nice and soft (about 10 mins), add crumbled, cooked turkey bacon and toss before serving.

Understanding Medical Weight Loss

For many people, losing weight is about more than appearance. It is about improving overall health and reducing the risk of serious medical conditions.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), obesity increases the risk of conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and certain cancers. Even a modest weight loss of 5% to 10% of total body weight can lead to meaningful improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood sugar control.

Medical weight loss is a physician-supervised approach designed to help individuals achieve and maintain a healthier weight safely and effectively. Unlike fad diets or quick-fix programs, medical weight loss focuses on long-term lifestyle changes, including healthy eating habits, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, stress management, and ongoing medical support. A healthcare provider evaluates each patient's health history, current weight-related concerns, and personal goals to develop an individualized treatment plan. In some cases, prescription medications may be recommended as part of a comprehensive program.

Successful medical weight loss is not based on medication alone. Experts emphasize that nutrition, exercise, behavioral changes, and regular follow-up with a healthcare team are key components of long-term success. Medical supervision helps patients monitor progress, manage potential side effects, and receive personalized guidance throughout their journey.

While every weight-loss journey is unique, the goal remains the same: improving health, increasing quality of life, and helping individuals achieve lasting results through evidence-based care and support.

2026 Support Group Sessions

Did you know we offer support groups many times during the year to help guide you and keep you on track with your weight loss goals?

Spearheaded by Debbie Juda, RN, LDN, our support group topics range from navigating eating habits during the holiday season when sweets fill the air, to simply learning how to master the kitchen and make the most out of home cooking.

All support group sessions are held virtually from the comfort of your own home.

We have two support group sessions remaining this year, so mark your calendars and join us!

September 16, 2026 - 5 pm

Register at: <https://l.btrr.to/eQU7S>

November 11, 2026 - 5 pm

Register at: <https://l.btrr.to/ClCjc>

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