



# Ask the Experts

I have read about this new bariatric procedure, which allows people to empty their own stomachs after food binges in order to lose weight. What are your views on this?

Last month the press reported a new “solution” for weight loss. The headline read: “The ‘eat like a pig’ slimming device: Controversial product pumps users’ stomach after food binges”. And that, in a nutshell, sums up how this new device claims to work. It enables the user to eat whatever they like and then flush out one third of the contents of their stomach via a tube inserted via the abdomen.

AspireAssist is brought to us by Aspire Bariatrics and is marketed as minimally invasive and reversible. Their website claims “dramatic results”, “quick recovery” and a “simple procedure” requiring no general anaesthetic. For individuals who have struggled to lose weight for a long time and may have considered bariatric surgery, it’s easy to see the appeal of being able to eat what you like and still lose weight. So long as you’re not squeamish.

The problem is, offering such ways to reduce the volume of food we digest and absorb does nothing to address the underlying reasons as to why an individual has gained weight in the first place. Obesity is a complex problem with multiple factors contributing to why an individual gains weight initially and subsequently struggles to lose it. These factors range from lacking a basic understanding of how to eat to maintain good health or not prioritising a nutritious diet to feeling unable to control food intake due to emotional reasons. Simply inserting a tube into someone’s stomach that allows

them to gorge themselves and then ‘empty a portion of the stomach contents into the toilet’ does absolutely nothing to address the root cause of the issue. If we do not address the underlying cause, the problem will only persist.

Tam Fry of the National Obesity Forum sums this up well in the *Daily Mail*. “I cannot believe that we have now invented a gadget that allows people to make gluttons of themselves and eat like pigs and not suffer the consequences. It sends out every wrong signal in the book about healthy eating” She goes on to describe the device as nothing short of “vomit on demand”.

The most common side effects of the AspireAssist include abdominal discomfort and constipation or diarrhoea with less common side effects including anaemia, infection and buried bumper syndrome. However, as this is a relatively new procedure we may well discover further side effects as more people opt to have the device fitted.

The company do claim that the patient will “learn healthier behaviours over time with lifestyle counselling” but with good nutritional counselling alone, most individuals who are committed to making positive changes to their diet and lifestyle are very capable of doing so without the ‘help’ of a stomach flushing device. In all honesty, reading the company website is enough to bring one close to emptying the contents of one’s stomach. No AspireAssist required. **AM**



**Kim Pearson** qualified as a nutritionist at London’s Institute for Optimum Nutrition in 2008 and has worked in the field of nutrition, diet and health for over ten years. In addition to her clinical practice, Kim regularly contributes to national magazines and newspapers and has appeared on television and radio. She speaks at medical aesthetic and beauty conferences and trains healthcare professionals in nutrition and diet. Kim is a full member of BANT (British Association of Applied Nutrition and Nutritional Therapy), CNHC (Complimentary and Natural Healthcare Council) and the Guild of Health Writers.

**DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS TO PUT TO OUR EXPERTS?**

Send your question about absolutely anything to do with running an aesthetic business to [vicky@aestheticmed.co.uk](mailto:vicky@aestheticmed.co.uk)