

# Augusta Weight Loss Support Groups

## *The Journey*

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*"To get something you've never had, you have to do something you've never done." .....Unknown*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 10 Thanksgiving Calorie Cutting Tips
- 2 The Best WOW Moment ever!
- 3 The Pain of Regain
- 3 LEAP
- 4 Holiday Potluck
- 4 What's Happening?
- 4 Mark Your Calendars
- 4 Save The Date



## Augusta WLS Support Groups

By Michael Blaney, M.D.

The AugustaWLS Support Group is open to the public regardless of hospital or surgeon affiliation. Meetings are held for pre- and post-surgery patients seeking support and to hear personal experiences from other patients. We encourage anyone considering weight-loss surgery (WLS) to attend a meeting prior to surgery. We believe that the only way to make an informed decision is by fully understanding all the details of surgery to include its risks and benefits.

Under the direction of the support coordinator, Carla Harrison, the support group operates in ways that you might not expect. Unlike traditional support groups, Carla provides an interactive and educational program at each meeting. You can come and simply listen or get actively involved.

The Augusta WLS Support Group is open to everyone in the Augusta community regardless of hospital or surgeon. We encourage you to attend. If you have difficulty getting out in the evening for whatever reason let Carla know and we will likely be able to assist through the network of patients who live near you.

Meetings are the first and third Thursdays of each month at 7 PM. They are held at Trinity Hospital of Augusta (formerly St. Joseph Hospital) on the ground floor in the

Sister Mary Louise Conference Room. Everyone is welcome to come including family members.

Our newest support group has been formed in Dublin under the leadership of Rick and Paige Crump. The Dublin Area support group will meet on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. They meet at the EMS/Rural Fire Building at 646 County Farm Road in Dublin.

For more information call Trinity Bariatric Center at 706-481-7298 or Email our support group coordinator, Carla Harrison [cdharr@hotmail.com](mailto:cdharr@hotmail.com) We also invite you to join our on-line support group on Yahoo. This is a way for our group to communicate and provide support during the month. The group can be accessed at: [www.augustawls.com](http://www.augustawls.com)

## Antidepressants and Discontinuation Syndrome

By: Tonia R. Parker, Ph.D., LPC

On the sixth day after my gastric bypass surgery, I woke up with several symptoms. I had the shakes, my motor coordination and balance were off, I was confused, I felt like very anxious, and I had a feeling of frequent electric shocks in my head and upper body. Fortunately for me, I had experienced this before and knew right away what it was – Antidepressant Discontinuation Syndrome.

Antidepressant Discontinuation Syndrome (also called SSRI/SNRI Discontinuation Syndrome) is estimated to occur in 10-20% of people who have been on an antidepressant medication for more than six weeks (Warner, et al, 2006). Any antidepressant can have withdrawal effects, but the newer medicines (SSRI's and SNRI's) have the particular symptoms described here. These include Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Effexor, Celexa, Pristiq, and others similar drugs.

Continued on pg. 2



### Antidepressants and Discontinuation Syndrome (cont.)

Symptoms of Antidepressant Discontinuation Syndrome typically occur anywhere from one day to a couple of weeks after stopping or reducing the dosage of the antidepressant medication. Timing and severity depend on the medicine. Prozac is the least likely to produce these effects, Paxil and Effexor are the most likely to produce them. Symptoms include tremor, imbalance, poor motor coordination, anxiety, confusion, and an “electric shock sensation”, fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, insomnia, dizziness, muscle aches, and blurred vision (Warner, et al, 2006). There are a couple of ways to minimize or treat these symptoms. If you are planning to come off of an antidepressant completely, it is extremely important that you are tapered off of the medication under a physician’s supervision. The physician may also want to switch you to a medicine with a lower likelihood of these symptoms (like Prozac) for a while then taper you off of it. If you plan on staying on the medication, your dosage may need to be adjusted.

While some of us may experience this from planned decreases in our medications, in my case it was directly related to the surgery. I was taking Effexor XR (extended release). I had conversed with people who were successful with taking the XR version after surgery, so I continued. However, despite the fact that I never missed a dose, the malabsorption from my surgery did not allow it to get into my system adequately. That is why I suddenly found myself with symptoms a few days later. If you experience these symptoms, you should contact your doctor right away to discuss changing the dosage or the medication you are taking. Be prepared that you may have to mention the possibility of Discontinuation Syndrome, as it has only been recognized in recent years, and some doctors are not familiar with it. Within a day of my changing from the Effexor XR to the quick release version, my symptoms were gone. It is an easy fix, and there is no point in suffering if you don’t have to!

#### Reference:

Warner, C.H., Bobo, W., Warner, C., Reid, S., Rachal, J. (2006). Antidepressant discontinuation syndrome. *American Family Physician*, 74(3), 449-456. Retrieved from <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2006/0801/p449.html>

## Antidepressants; My Story

By: Joe Ann, RNY patient

Dr. Chasen was talking about antidepressants at one of his support group meetings. I just wanted to share a little personal information about what happened to me. Don’t stop them all of the sudden or you could have a really bad experience like me. I went into a downward spiral that just wouldn’t stop. For some unknown reason, I didn’t get my anti-depressant prescription refilled; I just stopped taking them. My husband says I was a total witch to live with. I flat out told him that if I could find a sharp enough knife, I would not be here the next day. He more or less put me on suicide watch and would hardly leave me alone until I got in to see my neurologist and got back on my medication. That is definitely one pill I do not miss taking now! I sent Carla a message to take me off the committee for the ball and told her that I was not coming back to support group, that I would no longer be here! I very seriously gave my family the worse time I think I have ever done to them. I had friends on the computer that I played games with and I deleted every one of them! I will probably not ever get some of them back.

Maybe from my experience if someone reads this, the same thing or worse will not happen to them. Take care of yourself and let your family and the people around you know when you need help. Don’t ever stop taking your anti-depressants without your doctor’s help!!



## Scrutiny and Judgment after Weight Loss Surgery (versus Respectful Personal Opinions)

By: Connie Stapleton, Ph.D.

"I always felt judged as an obese person, and now, after losing 230 pounds, I still feel a lot of scrutiny from people. They watch as I eat, they take it upon themselves to comment on my food selection ('Do you really think you should eat *that*?'), they judge my weight ('You're looking *too* thin'), and many people come right out and inform me that I 'took the easy way out.' Some people seem like they are just waiting for me to fail. It's really frustrating that people think they can comment about my weight, my appearance, what I eat, how I eat, if I eat, and then make assumptions about me and my life as a whole." This commentary reflects how many WLS patients feel.

Celebrities who have had WLS are even more susceptible to the scrutiny of others than the hundreds of thousands of surgical weight loss patients who are not in the public eye. These famous personalities can really take a "judgment beating," not only from the general public, but from fellow WLS patients, as well. Critical comments from others make the post-surgical patient cringe, yet it is sometimes that same post-surgical patient slinging the critical, judgmental, opinionated arrows. "Mr. TV has really packed the pounds back on." "Ms. Spotlight uses the stress of her job as an excuse for her weight regain." "He doesn't care about his weight; he just cares about getting in front of a camera." "She's obnoxious and makes us all look bad."

Ironic, isn't it? No one likes being judged, but many of us fail to recognize when we're the one doing the judging!

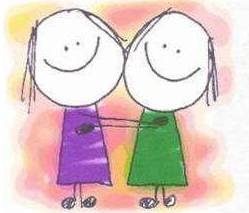
Here are a couple of thoughts for all of us to ponder:

*My Health. My Responsibility. This Day. Every Day.* Each of us needs to focus on the choices we make every single day and focus less on other what other people are doing (or not doing). The choices we make, healthy or unhealthy, lead to consequences, positive or negative. If we focus on making our own healthy choices, we can spend our time enjoy the positive results of those choices.

*I'm the only one walking in my shoes.* Our behavior is often prompted by needs that we may not understand ourselves. Most of us have made some choices we wish we hadn't at some point in our life. Later, when we look back, we can see more clearly what we needed at the time and realize there may have been a healthier way to get that need met. Living and learning! When someone does something we judge negatively, have compassion and remember that we are not in their shoes. We don't know what experiences they have had or what emotional need they are trying to get met through their behavior. Share your OPINION. Don't judge.

Next time you hear yourself sounding like you are "the expert" on another person, make an effort to express your thoughts as personal opinions. The person who judges by name-calling or criticizing or by making comments that sound like facts ("he's only doing that show for publicity purposes") are perceived negatively by others. If somebody at the office talks negatively about the person who has gone to lunch, you can bet they're going to be talking about you the same way when you leave!

Go ahead and share your opinions, but own them as just that! Allow others to share their opinions, as well. It's true what "they say" about opinions: we all have them and we have a right to share them. We don't, however, have a right to judge or criticize others or to call them names. Talk about others like you would like them to talk about you! Focus on your own behavior and you'll be nentv husv!



The bariatric center is currently accepting reservations for the next LEAP (Learning Everything Again Pays) seminar scheduled for **January 15, 2011**. Please call the center at 706-481-7398 for additional information. **All proceeds from LEAP are donated to the Augusta Bariatric Coalition, a project of the National Legacy Foundation**



## Bariatric Ball 2011

By: *Carla Harrison, Bariatric Support Coordinator*

Our Bariatric Ball is quickly approaching. I really need everyone's help this year. In order to raise funds for the Augusta Bariatric Coalition, we need to reach out to local businesses and sell ad space in our program. It's a wonderful way for our support group members to know which local businesses support us in our new healthier lifestyle. The next time you are out shopping, working out, getting your hair done, etc., please take a moment to talk with the manager about our ball and the opportunity to have an ad in the back of our program. It's also a great way for

## What's Happening?

By *Carla Harrison, Bariatric Support Coordinator*

Free Informational Seminars – 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month at Trinity Hospital of Augusta. Meet in the ground floor conference room at 5:30 pm. Seminars are open to the public. People seeking information on bariatric surgery are encouraged to stay for the Weight Loss Surgery Support Group Meeting immediately following the informational seminar.

Support Group Meetings – 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month at Trinity Hospital of Augusta at 7pm. Meetings are held in the ground floor conference room. Everyone is welcome!

**New group formed in Dublin!!**

Bariatric Support Coordinator contact information:  
 Carla Harrison  
 Phone: 706-945-5272  
 Email: [cdharr@hotmail.com](mailto:cdharr@hotmail.com)

**Augusta WLS  
 Support Groups**

### Midtown Surgical Specialists

2101 Central Avenue  
 Augusta, GA 30904  
 Phone: (706) 738-3359

### Message Board:

<http://www.augustawls.com>

### Web address:

<http://www.augustasurgery.com>

<http://www.trinitybariatrics.com>

E-mail: [info@augustasurgery.com](mailto:info@augustasurgery.com)



local churches to spread the word about their programs. Ad space is open to patients and family members too! What a great way to thank your loved ones that have supported you along the way! The ads are also a wonderful place to show off the new you with before and after pictures!

Ad flyers are available in the files section of the message board. Submission deadline is 24 January 2011. Get your ads in now!



## Mark Your Calendars!!



- JAN 15<sup>nd</sup>, 2011** – LEAP 7:30am  
 Formal Clothing Exchange 4-6pm
- JAN 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011** - Informational Seminar, 5:30pm  
 \* Dr. Arthur Chasen  
 Support Group Meeting, 7pm
- JAN 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011** - Dublin Support Group Meeting  
 7 – 8:30pm  
 EMS/Rural Fire Building  
 646 County Farm Rd.  
 Dublin, GA 31021  
 Info: [paige\\_crump@yahoo.com](mailto:paige_crump@yahoo.com)
- JAN 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011** - **FREE** Belly Dance Lesson  
 Trinity Hosp Conference Rm.
- FEB 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011** – Informational Seminar, 5:30pm  
 \*Dr. Michael Blaney  
 Support Group Meeting, 7pm
- FEB 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011** - Bariatric Ball, 6pm  
 Augusta Marriott, tickets online:  
<http://augustabariatricball.eventbrite.com/>
- FEB 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011** - Informational Seminar, 5:30pm  
 \*Dr. Arthur Chasen  
 Support Group Meeting, 7pm



Join us as we help  
 WLS patients here in  
 Augusta. Sell a  
 program ad today!

**Augusta  
 Bariatric  
 Coalition**

a member of the National Legacy Foundation