

Bariatric surgery role statement

This role statement was developed by members of the Bariatric Surgery Interest Group.

It lists the knowledge and skills of an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) working in Bariatric Surgery.

Knowledge

- Current national obesity management guidelines and the role of bariatric surgery on the weight loss continuum.
- Eligibility criteria to qualify for bariatric surgery, common types of surgery and the risks, complications and nutritional implications of each.
- Perioperative and post-operative dietary prescriptions including Very Low Energy Diets to reduce surgical risk, texture modifications, prevention of dumping syndrome, gastrointestinal healing, safe recovery, and addressing/preventing nutritional deficiencies.
- Aspects of long-term patient management such as management of post-operative pregnancy, maintaining nutritional status and prevention of late weight regain.¹
- Common mental health issues and their relationship with nutrition and eating behaviour, including an understanding of disordered eating in the development of morbid obesity.
- Recognise the impact of medications on weight management, such as psychotropics and steroids.

Skills

- Employ a patient-centred counselling approach that includes a non-judgemental attitude with respect to an individual's choice to undergo bariatric surgery.
- Determine appropriate and realistic bariatric surgery outcomes taking into consideration individual variables such as type of surgery, medical history and weight history.

- Identify barriers and enablers to post-operative adherence to nutritional recommendations that may jeopardise long-term weight loss and psychosocial outcomes and use this information to advise the care team on the appropriateness of surgical intervention and to inform a patient's decision to proceed with surgery.
- Identify history of disordered eating behaviours and address the re-emergence of disordered or maladaptive eating behaviours through management and referring on if needed.
- Employ behaviour change and counselling techniques to facilitate nutritional adequacy perioperatively and achieve longer term patient centred goals around health improvements postoperatively.
- Ability to recognise that mental health is a complicating factor in weight management and to seek regular clinical supervision with an appropriate clinician (either intra or inter-disciplinary).

Activities entry level APDs would conduct

- Apply the required skills and knowledge to the nutrition care process when working with bariatric surgery patients prior to and following bariatric surgery.
- Determine realistic healthy eating and weight goals in collaboration with the patient taking into consideration type of surgery, medical history and weight history.
- Provide appropriate nutritional education prior to and following surgery to support post-operative adherence to nutritional recommendations.

Activities APDs working at a higher level would conduct

- Provide comprehensive dietetic consultations with consideration of the psychosocial aspects of seeking surgical intervention, readiness for change and understanding emotional connections with food.
- Read and interpret body composition data and changes within this data over time.
- Implement advanced nutrition counselling skills such as motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioural therapy to engage patients in a long-term therapeutic relationship to enhance treatment outcomes.
- Management of post-operative nutritional complications associated with various surgeries
- Plan appropriate menus for bariatric patients in institutional food services relevant to perioperative or postoperative stage.

For more, [download the full role statement](#). The full statement includes a list of document references.

Get in touch

If you have questions about this role statement, contact us at policy@dietitiansaustralia.org.au

[The role of an Accredited Practising Dietitian](#)

Our role statements describe the skills and knowledge of an APD working in a particular area of practice.

[Seeing a dietitian in Australia](#)

Dietitians treat a range of health conditions. They understand how nutrition affects the body and will give you expert nutrition and dietary advice.