

Couple tries banding surgery to lose weight

09:37 AM Mountain Standard Time on Thursday, November 9, 2006

By Amy Alvidrez / 3TV Producer

Surgery is usually one of the last things that people turn to when trying to losing weight.

This holds especially true for a Queen Creek husband and wife.

Was going under the knife the answer they needed to take control of their health?

"My blood sugar was out of control," Jennifer Bradshaw said. "I didn't want to live like that ... can't do this anymore."

"I've got five kids," Todd Bradshaw said. "I've got to be around for them. I've got to be around for my wife. I don't want to live like this anymore. I don't want to be the big person and I can't do it on my own. I needed the help."

Todd and Jennifer Bradshaw have battled their weight since saying I do.

Trying diet after diet, nothing seemed to take the pounds off long term.

At a combined weight of almost 600 pounds, they knew they needed help so they turned to the Weight Loss Institute of Arizona.

"We have nurses here, we have dieticians, exercise physiologists and psychologists to meet all the needs of bariatric patients," said Dr. John Debarros, a bariatric surgeon.

Debarros and Dr. Michael Orris are the surgical team behind the Bradshaws' weight loss.

The couple decided laproscopic banding surgery was the way to go since they felt gastric bypass was too invasive.

"How the band works, this portion is placed laproscopically in the abdomen and goes a! round th e upper portion of the stomach," Orris said.

"It is much less invasive than the gastric bypass," he said. "There is no rerouting of the intestine. There is no transection of the stomach."

Orris said what makes the band unique is that it is adjustable, meaning doctors can control the amount of restriction to the stomach through a port placed under the skin.

"In the office, we access this port through ultrasound guidance," Orris said. "Inject saline through here. The saline will go through the tubing and fills the bladder of this band and that's how you adjust the band. As you lose weight, you would tighten the band just as you lose weight, you would tighten your belt."

Jennifer entered the clinic at 242 pounds. Since having the surgery almost a year ago she's lost 110 pounds, weighing in at 132.

Todd now weighs 232 pounds, losing a total of 94 so far.

"This is not a cosmetic procedure by any means," Debarros said. "This procedure is solely for the health of the patient."

While weight-loss surgery may not be for everyone, Todd and Jennifer say doing it gave them a second chance at life.

"When you lose the weight, you are healthier," Todd said.

"I've had so many friends say 'you cheated,'" Jennifer said. "OK then, I'm a cheater. Call me what you want, but I am healthier, I feel better and if I look better, that's OK, too."

The surgery isn't cheap, but some insurance providers will cover the majority of costs if you meet certain criteria.

For more information please contact Paul Barros at Weight Loss Institute of Arizona at 480-829-6100.