

Set Up for Success

South Knoxville man loses weight, gains confidence at Fort Sanders Center for Bariatric Surgery

Despite regular physical activity, Josh Ellis has struggled his whole life to find and maintain a healthy body weight. Ellis lives in South Knoxville with his wife and two daughters, and in addition to his full-time job, takes care of his farm. He sought weight-loss options at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, and after undergoing bariatric surgery in 2019, found confidence in himself and his size.

Before surgery, daily activities like mowing lawns and feeding the farm animals put strain on Ellis' joints. He recalls knee and shoulder pain in particular. "I was tired of being big. I woke up one day and realized I wanted to live longer. I wanted to watch my kids grow up and eventually see grandkids. The lifestyle I had was not going to accommodate that."

Last year, Ellis attended an informational seminar about weight-loss surgery where he met Jonathan Ray, MD, board certified general and bariatric surgeon at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center. Knowing other people who had success with Dr. Ray and bariatric surgery, Ellis knew he was in good hands. At his heaviest, Ellis weighed 415 pounds and had a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 53. He took medication to curb

his high blood pressure and slept with a CPAP machine to treat his sleep apnea.

Gastric Bypass

Ellis underwent robotic gastric bypass surgery in December 2019 at Fort Sanders Regional. Gastric bypass surgery changes how your stomach and small intestine handle the food you eat. Using a laparoscopic incision, the surgeon reduces the stomach size and creates an outlet to the small intestine, or a "bypass." The result is a person feeling satiated with less food.

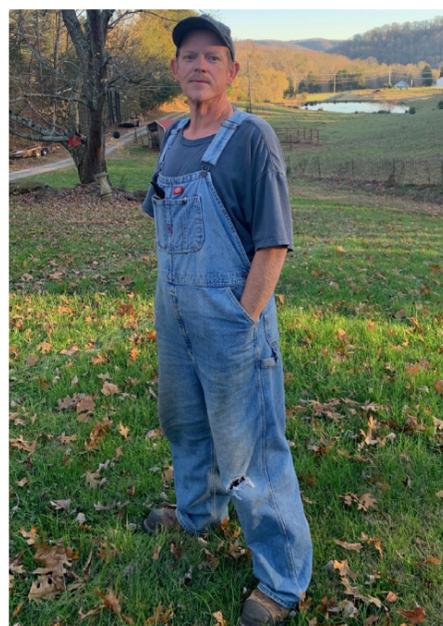
Robotic-assisted surgery uses a robotic platform that combines a surgeon's skill with computer-enhanced laparoscopic technology. Robotic-assisted surgeries are minimally invasive, leading to less pain, shorter hospital stays and a quicker recovery.

Today, Ellis says he's doing great. In one year, he lost 225 pounds and reports no sign of sleep apnea or high blood pressure, and no longer requires medication. "It's a really good feeling," Ellis laughs when he says, "I feel strong, which is good because I'm about half the person I was before."

Ellis' wife has helped him every step of the way. He says, "She's been phenomenal. I think it would be impossible not to have someone supporting you.



Josh Ellis feels fantastic and is down 225 pounds a year after robotic gastric bypass surgery at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center.



They may not understand exactly what you're going through, but they know you're undergoing a change."

Emotional Changes and Challenges

Ellis says the physical change following surgery was immediate. "It's definitely a complete lifestyle change with eating habits. On a regular diet, you still crave that big bowl of ice cream. But with surgery, it's different -- your mind may want it but your body doesn't."

Emotionally, Ellis' confidence has surged after losing some weight. "I don't think I ever realized I wasn't

confident. But I notice now I have more confidence when I talk to people.

"I have learned about my health, which is something I never took into account before. If I was on lunch break I hurried to eat, or if I wanted something I just went and got it." For family meals, Ellis says he tries to stay away from bread, potatoes and sweets. "It's been a good change, he reflects.

Freed from a Burden

Dr. Ray says, "We want people to know this option is available to them. For many patients, weight loss remarkably improves their

heart's ability to beat. We see patients reverse heart disease and coronary artery disease, resolve diabetes and improve cholesterol." He continues, "When they see the change in themselves, it's freeing, like a burden lifted, and Josh Ellis is an example of that. He worked hard and got his life back."

Education is Key

Dr. Ray says, "We make a commitment in our practice to follow patients for the rest of their life -- they have a choice of course, but regular follow-up appointments are recommended. We also want to make sure patients have

the knowledge beforehand to make the decision about whether surgery is right for them. They attend education classes in the weeks before surgery and have material they can review at home."

Ellis recalls, "Dr. Ray was very thorough and explained what to expect, even weeks and months after surgery." At Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, where he spent one night, he says his care team was "there 'on the spot.' If there was any twinge, they checked it out and made sure I had all my medications. They cared for you and did not want you to hurt."

The farm owner was most surprised by the renewed amounts of energy he experienced. "When you are used to your joints and body aching, you can sometimes block it out. Now they don't hurt -- not my knees, shoulders, or anything. We go hiking more now. We take the girls to Cades Cove and hike for three or four miles, which was rare before."

To anyone considering a similar procedure, Ellis advises to be selective when researching, and consider the information source. He says, "Make your mind up that it's going to be a lifestyle change before you have the surgery. Then, I say go for it!"

Minimally Invasive, Robotic-Assisted Surgery Available at Fort Sanders Regional



In 2004, Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center was the first to introduce a minimally invasive, surgical robotic system to East Tennessee, and now the hospital is adding more robots to its surgical team.

Robotic-assisted surgery is a highly effective alternative to some traditional surgical procedures. Combined with the skills of surgeons, this computer-based technology can enhance the healing and well-being of surgery patients.

Bariatric surgery patients like Josh Ellis can benefit from robotic-assisted surgery. According to Jonathan Ray, MD, board certified general and bariatric surgeon at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, 85 to 90 percent of robotic-assisted gastric bypass patients go home the next day,

and most people are walking the halls within two hours following surgery. This procedure, like other forms of robotic-assisted surgery, allows a more rapid recovery and decreased discomfort and pain in the majority of patients.

The surgical robotics system replicates the surgeon's movements in real time and is completely under the surgeon's control at all times. It cannot be programmed or make decisions on its own. The surgeon controls the robot's movements, allowing for greater dexterity and access to hard-to-reach areas of the body.

Dr. Ray says the tool is ergonomically designed for the doctor to manipulate the tools in a non-fatiguing way. The computer provides a three-dimensional image of the body,

magnified 10 or 20 times what the normal eye can see.

Fort Sanders Regional's surgical robots cover a number of specialty areas, including bariatric surgery, general surgery, gynecological surgery, neurosurgery and oncology, among others.

Am I a Candidate?

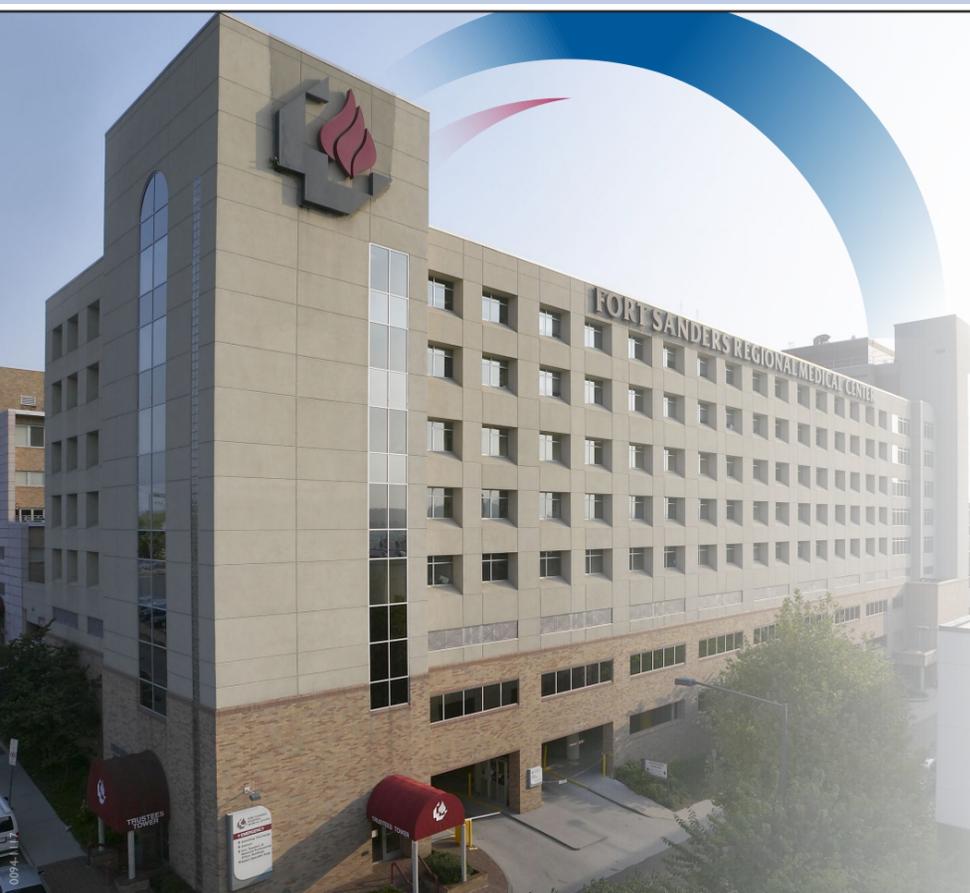
Deciding to have bariatric surgery is a commitment to better health. For many patients, bariatric surgery is also a life-saving procedure. You are a candidate for bariatric surgery if you:

- Are an adult (age 18 or more)
- Have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or more
- Have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 35 or more with an obesity-related condition such as diabetes, sleep apnea, high

blood pressure, high cholesterol, etc.

- Have been overweight for more than five years
- Have multiple failed attempts at non-surgical weight loss
- Are ready to make a lifelong commitment to change your lifestyle, diet and exercise habits
- Understand and are committed to following the nutritional diet required after bariatric surgery to avoid malnutrition
- Exhibit emotional stability
- Are physically able to undergo abdominal surgery

Each patient is different. If you feel you are a candidate and are interested in weight-loss surgery, please call 865-541-4500 or visit FSregional.com/bariatric-surgery.



Regional Excellence.

Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center is the referral hospital where other facilities send their most complex patients.

- Certified Stroke Center
- Award-Winning Heart Care
- Neuro Center of Excellence
- Robotically-Assisted Surgery