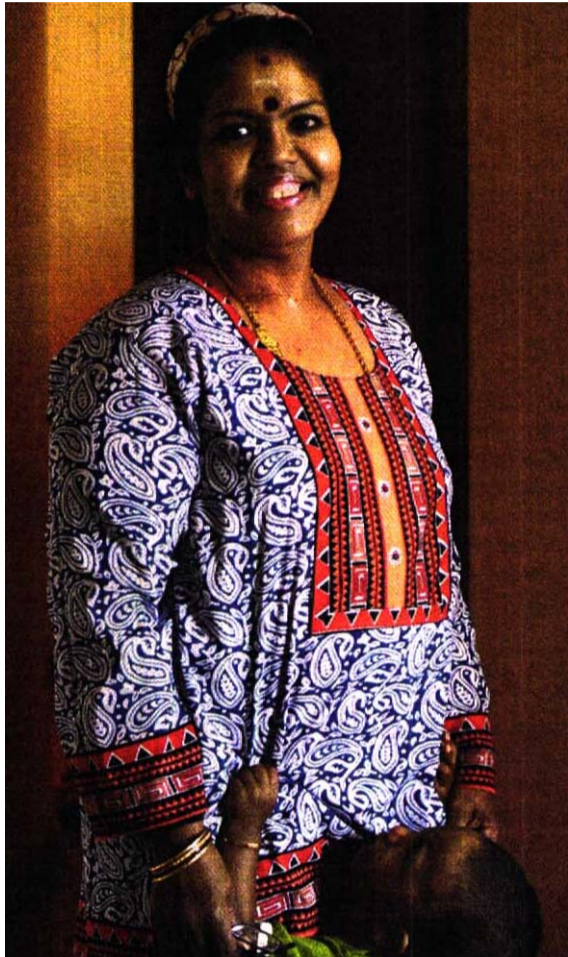


From Size XXXL to M

By Tan Lay Leng



GASTRIC bypass surgery helped this housewife shed 27kg and rid her of insulin jabs. Tan Lay Leng reports

Mrs Mangay Sundaram, 49, used to dread looking at her stomach. It had become hard and blackened from all the needle puncture wounds caused by the daily insulin injections she had needed since she was 42.

The puncture marks have since faded as she no longer needs the jabs but the memory of those traumatic years still makes her shudder.

Her life and health turned around because of a gastric bypass operation. Not only did it reduce her weight from 85kg to 58kg, it also meant she no longer needed to inject herself with insulin.

Mrs Sundaram remembers herself as a skinny girl during her primary school days. She started putting on weight when she hit puberty and her love for ice cream and chocolate did not help.

By the time she left secondary school, she was 1.47m tall and weighed almost 70kg. She continued piling on the kilos after she got married and gave birth to a daughter at age 20.

By the time she was 25 and her third child was born, the housewife had become diabetic – just like her parents.

She started taking medication for the diabetes and tried to lose weight, but found it hard to stick to any diet and exercise as she loved to eat.

Over the years, her diabetes got worse and she had to start on the insulin shots seven years ago. Then the frequency of the jabs had to be increased from once to three times a day. She also had high cholesterol and hypertension, both of which required medication.

Her endocrinologist, Dr Sunali Ganguli at the Life Centre at Singapore General Hospital (SGH), became concerned and recommended she spoke to a weight-loss surgeon. Dr Shanker Pasupathy, a consultant at SGH's department of general surgery, proposed a gastric bypass to help her lose weight and control her diabetes.

The procedure creates a small stomach pouch that connects directly to the middle portion of the small intestine, bypassing most of the stomach and the start of the small intestine.

This reduces food intake and absorption.

Mrs Sundaram was all for the surgery as she hated the idea of having to inject herself with insulin for life. Besides, her weight, which had ballooned to 85kg, was causing her pain in the joints and making her breathless.

She also loathed the way she looked: "I would feel upset each time I saw my reflection in the mirror; I felt I looked like a baby elephant."

The surgery in April last year went well and she was discharged after four days. For a few weeks, she was on a liquid protein diet, followed by a soft diet. By the second month, she could eat solid food, but she would feel full after eating just three tablespoons of food. She also had to eat slowly so as not to overload her much reduced stomach capacity.

After a month, she was 6kg lighter. A year and three months later, she had shed 27kg. She no longer needs the daily insulin shots

and takes just one pill a day for her diabetes.

She stopped her hypertension drugs three months ago and the dosage of her cholesterol medication has been reduced.

Mrs Sundaram said she was sad at first when she could only watch her family enjoy the delicious food she cooked and was not able to join them.

But she is over that and even jokes that she eats the same amount of food as her one-year-old grandson. She now eats just a slice of bread for breakfast and a little rice and vegetables for lunch and dinner. She avoids oily food and eats more fruit.

As part of her small intestine has been bypassed and not all the nutrients from what she eats is absorbed, she supplements her diet with vitamins and minerals.

The upside is that she no longer gets tired easily. Apart from taking care of her grandson, she also does the housework and climbs a few flights of stairs at her block of flats for exercise. In addition, she brisk walks for half an hour daily with her family.

Best of all, she feels good when she sees a happier, more confident woman in the mirror.

Her waist size has shrunk from 107cm to 91cm and her dress size has gone from XXXL to medium.

"I am very thankful to both my doctors because without them, I would not have been able to achieve all this and live like a normal person.

"I strongly recommend people in a similar situation to go for this surgery. With determination, you can achieve your goal and take back control of your life," she said.

lltan@sph.com.sg