

VHH doctor performs innovative obesity surgery

Patient is recovering, has already dropped 16 pounds.

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A patient who underwent an innovative weight loss surgery at Verdugo Hills Hospital last month is recovering and back at work in clothes that fit more loosely than they used to.

Dr. Ara Keshishian, a Glendale-based bariatric surgeon, performed the single- incision laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy on Aug. 27. It was the first time the procedure was performed in Los Angeles County, Keshishian said.

Traditional sleeve gastrectomies require doctors make up to four incisions in a patient's abdomen through which they insert the camera and surgical tools needed to perform the operation. The new procedure allows doctors to make a single incision at the belly button, reducing recovering time and scaring.

"Most of us have belly buttons that are 'innies,' so in an innie, what you do is make a cut inside the belly button," Keshishian said. "Even though the distance from one end to the other might be 1 centimeter, if you cut within the belly button itself you have a 2 or 3 centimeter incision."

The patient, 45-year-old Danette Feeney of Bakersfield, was about 245 pounds pre-surgery. She struggled with her weight for years, Feeney said.

"I tried everything, Nutrisystem, Jenny Craig, [weight loss] shots, the gym, all of that," Feeney said. "It would work but [the weight] would always come back."

Her cholesterol levels began to inch up and she showed preliminary signs of heart problems, so Feeney's doctor recommended bariatric surgery. Other health problems disqualified her from the Lap-Band procedure, but she eventually connected with Keshishian, who has 10 years' experience with sleeve gastrectomies.

The surgery involves reducing the size of the stomach by more than 50%, leaving the patient able to consume about 4 ounces of food per sitting. The ideal candidate for the procedure is someone who has about 100 pounds to lose, and who doesn't have a lot of co-morbid conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, Keshishian said. They also have to meet criteria set forth by the National Institute of Health.

"You just eat a couple of bites of something and you are full, you are completely satisfied," Feeney said. "You find that you make better choices because you are looking for more of the good stuff that have more protein and more vitamins rather than junk."

Feeney went home 24 hours after the procedure. She is now back at work and feeling great. She hopes to lose about 100 pounds.

"I think it is amazing," Feeney said. "I am completely happy with it. It has been three weeks and I have lost 16 pounds, so automatically things are starting to get looser."