

# Mail Today

## can fit into an airline seat now

Struggling to lose weight can be an overwhelming experience for many like Raman Sain, who ultimately went in for a bariatric surgery to help him turn his life around

**H**IS SMILE lights up the room and it's easy to see why 30 year old Raman Sain is the life of every party. A raconteur par excellence, his witty quips can keep you laughing long after the joke is over. Confidence oozes out of his pores. A year ago, Raman's personality was overshadowed by his health concerns. He weighed an astounding 210 Kgs. The physical and emotional problems this huge weight brought with it were numerous. Breathing was a struggle and his knees could not support him, so walking even 100 metres was a huge effort. His clothes were especially tailored because no store had clothes large enough to fit him, and he was forced to travel first class when he took a flight, because the seats in economy class would not accommodate him. As bad as the physical impact was the emotional one: He felt terrible about himself, and knew that he was to blame for his obesity. "I started putting on weight when I was 16 and living in the UK. My life was different from that of most Indian kids- I had more freedom, and this led me to every pub and burger joint in town," confesses Raman.

Even though he continued to gain weight, Raman refused to give up his lifestyle and binge eating. His life revolved around beer and junk food and exercise was just a dream. As he grew older, the binge sessions only intensified. When his parents and family members expressed alarm at his ballooning body, he would go on a diet, lose 10 kgs, and then treat himself to a pizza with a double helping of cheese to celebrate!

Eventually his body reached such drastic proportions that the idea of dieting was a dream. His naturally effervescent personality began to take a beating. When he came to India for a wedding, he had to tolerate taunts and shocked looks from not just the people he knew, but strangers on the roads too. "Indians have a very low level of tolerance, and anything that does not fit or is not acceptable socially is automatically humbled and made fun of. No wonder these people here are adamant not to do anything about it- they are worried about the attention they will draw to themselves," he says. It was at this point that he



BEFORE



AFTER

RAHUL IRANI

### BY RITUPARNA MUKHERJEE

made a decision to go in for a bariatric surgery. Since this time, Raman has lost 80 kgs and more in a span of a year. His life has changed and today he stands out as an example of hope for others who feel they have lost the battle against obesity.

#### WHAT IS WEIGHT LOSS SURGERY?

"Weight loss surgery addresses a host of health problems brought about by excess weight," says Dr Ashish Vashista, coordinator, bariatric surgery, Max hospital. This surgery is an option available to those who are roughly 45 kgs overweight. Also called bariatric surgery, this involves three kinds of procedures. In one, a gastric band is fitted around the upper part of the stomach, effectively creating a smaller stomach and limiting food intake. In another, a portion of the stomach is "stapled" to create a smaller stomach, and the length of the intestine is also reduced, thus delaying the mixing of food with digestive juices and hindering its complete absorption. This incomplete digestion ensures that most of the food is not absorbed. The third kind of procedure, which doctors' feel is

#### PRECAUTIONS AFTER TUMMY SURGERY

- It's important to listen to the doctor and follow the prescribed diet, otherwise the surgery is a waste. Doctors warn patients that if they indulge in fatty food and insist on drinking sweetened beverages, beer and other alcoholic drinks, the weight loss will be less.
- Exercise is also essential. Raman enjoys a 4-5 km walk every day apart from regular sessions at the gym where he uses the treadmill and cross trainer. "I work out at this great gym where lots of pretty ladies also come... It's great fun and I love the mobility that comes with the weight loss," he says.
- Like every major surgery, this too has its share of risks. The stomach is elastic, and might stretch thus accommodating more food, defeating the purpose of the surgery. The body may also reject the gastric band, since it is a foreign body. Vitamin and protein deficiencies might arise because the digestive absorption is affected by the procedure. But doctors feel that these risks are worth taking simply because they pale in comparison to the benefits. "Every part of your body benefits from this surgery, and ensures lifetime health for those whose health is their main problem," says Dr Vashista.

the safest is the "sleeve gastrectomy" in which the stomach is reduced surgically. The intestine is not reduced, so the digestive and absorptive process is not tampered with, and no foreign bodies are introduced in the body.

#### IT SHRINKS THE STOMACH

Reducing the size of the stomach so that it holds only two ounces of food might sound like a drastic step, but for those like Raman, this procedure is a godsend. He says it's like being on a diet without being on a diet. "Since the size of the stomach is significantly less, a person feels full after eating a very small portion, and automatically, the weight starts dropping. A diet high in protein and low in fat and vitamins and calcium supplements is prescribed, along with counselling sessions to ensure that the patient doesn't indulge in "mental" eating," explains Dr Vashista. Counselling sessions are imperative because if the patient cannot handle the diet and lifestyle prescribed, the surgery is not done.

Raman has no problems following the diet. "Once you see yourself in the mirror after losing weight in the first month, you realise what a huge change has taken place. Once the health problems start diminishing one by one you realise how much of your life you missed because of them." One can eat everything that was enjoyed before the surgery, except that the quantity is reduced. Also two spoons of soup is equivalent to five to six rotis. I have even more fun now because my weight doesn't slow me down. I eat a small portion of everything. Where I used to drink about 9 pints of beer, I now prefer a tall glass of water!" he declares.

#### IT BOOSTS THE CONFIDENCE

The confidence gained by the surgery is as big a gain as the improvement in health. Raman is overjoyed at the fact that he can buy clothes from regular stores. Apart from the weight loss, the positive health impact of the surgery also includes an increase in immunity and better blood circulation. rituparna.mukherjee@mailtoday.in

#### KITCHEN REMEDY



Leafy greens are packed with special carotenoids which are powerful antioxidants that can boost a person's vision and slow the deterioration caused by macular degeneration. Most importantly, it can prevent the disease. Macular degeneration occurs when cells in the macula - a yellow spot at the centre of the eye's retina - break down.