



Risk of vitamin deficiency after stomach reduction

Some obesity patients who have a stomach reduction fail to take their pills every day as prescribed, which can lead to vitamin deficiency.

This finding comes from research by Marieke Smelt. She obtained her doctorate on 16 September in the Human Nutrition and Health group. Smelt works at Catharina Hospital in Eindhoven. 'Changes in the gastrointestinal tract after a stomach reduction lead to a decrease in the uptake of nutrients, vitamins and minerals,' explains Smelt. 'This can

result in vitamin deficiency even with a healthy diet.' To prevent this, patients are

prescribed vitamin supplements designed especially for them. However, Smelt discovered that a substantial proportion of the patients (22 per cent) did not take the supplements, or not every day. She wanted to know why these patients were failing to take the vitamin supplements. 'Only then can we figure out how to improve this.'

Over 4600 patients from four hospitals in the Netherlands filled in a questionnaire about the use of multivitamins. The main reasons

for not taking the pills were the side effects, the off-putting taste or smell, and the lack of information. The cost was another issue. In addition, 30 per cent of the patients were not satisfied with the explanation they got from the health professionals in the hospital. 'Apparently we are not doing a good job as professionals,' says Smelt.

Insurance

However, steps have already been taken, explains Smelt. 'A stomach complaints outpatient clinic has been set up. We also now discuss the patient's personal preferences and potential issues.' In addition, the supplement manufacturers are working on how to improve the taste and smell. Smelt also sees a role for health insurers. 'Stomach reduction surgery is not a quick fix for obesity. It requires lifelong treatment, for example with these multivitamins, and insurers need to acknowledge this. If patients develop medical problems later on, the healthcare costs will be much higher.' TL

'You can get vitamin deficiency after a stomach operation even with a healthy diet'