

**Dr.Mohan Thomas - Cosmetic Surgeon**

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## **It took me 6 surgeries and 2 years to get fit**

Bariatric surgery is not the superway to weight loss, as one 27-year-old discovered. She talks to us of her journey from fat to flap to fit

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Finally she's getting married. The 27-year-old parties every Saturday night. "I ride my fiancé's bike and dance without anyone staring at me. Life is beautiful," she says. Not unusual for a young woman. Only, this south Mumbai resident spent years in self-imposed isolation.

At 23, she weighed 180 kilos and rarely got out of her apartment. As the only child, she was pampered and was addicted to junk food. Her weight was clearly a result of her lifestyle as her family has no history of a thyroid problem or a genetic disposition to obesity.

### **Love meant food**

"I binged on fried stuff, pizzas and aerated drinks," she says. "Once I joined college, I became a laughing stock. Everything came to a standstill. Girls my age were busy enticing boyfriends and going out, while I stayed at home ordering food and watching DVDs."

Slowly, the cheerful woman turned into a loner, shunning everyone but family, "I stopped shopping as other shoppers were more interested in staring at me. I never went to parties and my friends stopped inviting me because they thought I was a big bore. I became angry, cranky and hopeless. TV and food were my only friends," she says.

She tried going to the gym, but her legs would hurt a lot. She loved swimming and joined a pool, but became the butt of jokes, so stopped going within a week.

Her mother tried to get her to seek psychological help, but she refused, "I was fat, not mad. My mother would fight with people who stared at me or shoo them away, but for how long could she do that? So I just stayed at home."

## Desperate measures

On a holiday to Mauritius, she heard about bariatric surgery and convinced her family to let her undergo it. In September 2008, she underwent a gastric bypass in Jaslok hospital and lost 120 kilos over 15 months. "It seemed like a miracle," she says. Elated, she ignored weight training and soon, depression set in again. "I was shocked to see most body parts go south. Skin hung in folds. My mom bought me clothes in my new size, but where would I put the skin?"

She met Dr Mohan Thomas, a senior cosmetic surgeon in Breach Candy Hospital, who told her about the „deflation syndrome“.

## Round two

"The Deflation Syndrome is a term that I coined to describe the loss of volume that accompanies large shifts in weight," says Thomas. "Envelopes of skin hang in key locations. Like a balloon that has been fully inflated and then deflated 50 per cent."

A series of surgeries over a period of several months restored her self-esteem. "The procedures were based on the aesthetics and form that accompany the human body. The areas of concern were breast, lateral chest wall, arms, abdomen, thighs and the posterior body. We performed lipoabdominoplasty, posterior body lift, thigh lift and breast reshaping." She lost another 10 kilos in 18 months and now weighs 72 kilos.

Though money was not a problem, it was still a heavy investment. They spent Rs 7 lakh on bariatric surgery and Rs 6 lakh on body contouring, "I had done a lot of research into bariatric surgery, but didn't realise that I would be back to square one SO soon."

"Bariatric surgery is not a cosmetic surgery; it's a life-saving surgery. If you lose close to 40 kilos, a lot of the skin shrinks back. But if you lose more than 120 kilos, you'll probably need contouring. It depends on the patient's choice," says Dr Mufazzal Lakdawala, a bariatric surgeon.



The South Mumbai resident underwent five body contouring surgeries with Dr Mohan Thomas of Breach Candy Hospital to lose weight and gain shape (Raju Shinde)

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