

# “I Started My Life Over” Hamilton Woman on Weight-Loss Surgery

Last fall, Melissa Hurst discovered the thrill of being able to pick up her son at her mother’s house a block away without help.



“Do you need a ride?” her husband, Ken, asked. “No,” Hurst said, “I’ll just run over there real quick.” Hurst, 34, ran the entire way. “It felt great,” she said. Small, daily victories like the joy of running show how dramatically her life has changed since undergoing bariatric surgery in May 2014. She bolts up stairs. She doesn’t feel tired or irritable.

“I know it sounds like a weight-loss TV commercial, but I can actually keep up with my kids,” says Hurst, a Hamilton kindergarten teacher and the mother of Tyler, 7, and Ethan, 1. “I feel like I started my life over again.”

## Choosing Bariatric Surgery



Hurst, who was 211 pounds at 5-foot-1, underwent a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy procedure with **Lisa Dobruskin, MD, FACS**, co-Director of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery at University Medical Center of Princeton (UMCP). The procedure reduces the stomach to about 20 percent of its original size through surgical removal, creating a new sleeve of stomach.

Within five months after her surgery, she had lost 70 pounds.

Hurst says while the surgery itself went very well, she works hard at weight loss every day. She’s learned to eat tiny portions and adjust to her much smaller appetite.

Bariatric and metabolic surgery is the most successful treatment for morbid obesity and it can reverse the damaging health effects of being overweight, such as diabetes and high blood pressure. The surgery reduces the size of the stomach to limit the amount a person can eat.

Surgery is an option for people who have repeatedly tried and failed to lose weight through dieting and exercise. To qualify, patients must have a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or more, or a BMI of 35 or more and a related medical condition such as diabetes, high blood pressure or sleep apnea.

“Many obese patients will get to the point where health problems start to accumulate, and they need to do something about it,” says Dr. Dobruskin. “These patients often realize there are so many things they are missing out on in life because of their weight.”

## A Way of Life

“Healthy living is now a way of life — I’m not trapped by food anymore,” Hurst says. “This surgery has completely changed the way I look and the way I feel — it’s the best decision I ever made.”

## A Center for Weight Loss

UMCP’s Center for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery has been accredited as Comprehensive by the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Accreditation and Quality Improvement Program, a joint program of the American College of Surgeons and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery.

The center provides services for patients undergoing bariatric and metabolic surgery, including consultations with weight-loss surgeons, nutritional counseling and coordination of care for obesity-related conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

“The goal of the center is to make the treatment of obesity for patients a comprehensive process,” Dr. Dobruskin says. “It will start before surgery and really continue helping these patients throughout their lives after surgery.”

In addition to Dr. Dobruskin, UMCP’s board certified, fellowship trained bariatric and metabolic surgeons include Robert E. Brolin, MD, co-Director, Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, and Wai-Yip Chau, MD.

**See page 18** for information on an upcoming online seminar on new guidelines for bariatric surgery.

To find a bariatric surgeon on staff at Princeton HealthCare System, please call 1800.FINDADR (1.800.346.3237).