

His stomach's tied up so he won't eat so much

DIETS DIDN'T WORK

But diets didn't work for Mr Khong.

He said: "I guess a part of me was rebelling against conforming. Fat was my identity for so long."

His eating habits were scary, to say the least.

Said the national service clerk: "I'd sit in front of the TV and eat all night — potato chips, soft drinks, and all sorts of other tidbits."

He did this for years.

His eating problem was not helped by the fact that he likes to cook for his family.

"Being a good cook, I love my food even more. It's not oily because I don't like oily food. I just eat a lot of the food I cook."

Oily food aside, there is really no food he does not like. He can spend up to a few hundred dollars a month just on food for himself.

BY NG WAN CHING

AT 153 kg or roughly the size of two men, Mr Andrew Khong needed to lose weight in a hurry or he could end up dead.

He just could not stick to a diet.

Even though doctors warned if he continued eating like he did, he is not likely to live beyond 40.

Obesity reduces life expectancy considerably. It is also associated with increased risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, joint problems, gall stones, stroke, heart and vascular diseases — and psychosocial problems.

So, at age 22, Mr Khong took a drastic step.

He underwent an operation on Tuesday

to place an adjustable band around his stomach to curb his appetite.

The lap band will remain in his body for the rest of his life. And make him eat less.

Said Dr Haridas Baladas, the surgeon at Alexandra Hospital who performed the key-hole operation: "A silicone band is inserted around the stomach to create a pouch. This pocket induces the feeling of being full faster and thus cuts down on food intake."

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS

DOCTORS first recommend diet, exercise and medication to help patients lose weight. When all that fails, then lap-band surgery (above) is recommended.

Dr Baladas, 36, has undergone intensive training in the field of upper gastro-intestinal surgery including lap-band surgery in Australia last year.

Losing about 1kg a week is "definitely possible" with this method, he said.

But it is recommended only for those with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of above 35. BMI is measured by dividing your weight in kilos with the square of your height in metres.

Mr Khong's BMI is 45.6.

The band is placed around the upper part of the stomach, dividing it into two compartments.

"The upper pouch can only hold a small amount of food. The remainder of the stomach lies below the band. The two parts are connected by means of a small opening created by the band. The upper pouch will empty more slowly, which means you will feel full longer," said Dr Baladas.

One great advantage is the adjustable band opening. Its diameter can be varied.

The inner surface of the band contains a balloon that is connected by tubing to a reservoir which is placed deep under the skin of the abdomen during surgery.

"After surgery, the surgeon can adjust the band opening by piercing the reservoir with a fine needle through the skin and adding or subtracting liquid to inflate or deflate the balloon," said Dr Baladas.

So the band opening can be adjusted without the need for another operation.

Another advantage is that the band can be inserted using laparoscopy, a surgical technique using keyhole incisions. Being less invasive (there is no cutting, stapling or crushing of the stomach), patients can leave the hospital four days after the operation.



Lap-Band
Adjustable Gastric Banding System

