

70% of 12-yr-old's stomach cut out

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Twelve-year-old Vishal Joshi's (name changed) father knew that he and his wife were "healthier than normal". So, though Vishal weighed 90kg when he was eight years old, they did not realise that there was something wrong with him.

But over the last four years, Vishal piled on 50kg more. The 12-year-old weighed a shocking 140kg and his Body Mass Index stood at 58.

On Thursday, Dr Abhay Agrawal, laproscopic bariatric surgeon at SevenHills Hospital and Asian Heart Institute, performed a laproscopic sleeve gastrectomy on Vishal. During the hour-long operation, 70% of his stomach was removed.

The boy is doing well, said Dr Agrawal. "Merely hours after the surgery, Vishal was sitting up and watching cricket on television."

The reason for Vishal's weight gain is his addiction to food. He would eat 15 parathas and sabzi for



Vishal Joshi, 12, with Dr Abhay Agrawal

breakfast. "We tried to control his food intake, but he would get very restless," said his father. "We started worrying a couple of years back when he weighed 100kg. We consulted four to five doctors who told us that he would lose weight when he hits puberty. But when it didn't happen, we realised that we need-

ed to do something about it."

Taunts from his peers at school led Vishal down a spiral of depression and low self-esteem. "We have been counselling him for the last six months. Initially his self-esteem was so low that he wouldn't even make eye contact," said Dr Agrawal.

Now, Vishal is expected to lose 60kg over the next year. But this is possible only if he maintains his weight and exercises regularly.

"He needs to eat the right food. As he will be eating very little, if he does not eat the right food, he might develop nutritional deficiencies. We have a nutritionist who will be monitoring his intake."

As per international guidelines, bariatric surgery cannot be conducted on a minor whose bones have not stopped growing. Dr Agrawal said: "Though Vishal is only 12 years old, he has the bone age of 16+, this means his bones won't grow any more. That's why we could perform the operation."