

## 12-yr-old undergoes weight-loss surgery

**MUMBAI:** On Thursday, 12-year-old Raj (name change) underwent a sleeve gastrectomy, a type of weight loss surgery at Agarwal Hospital in Malad. Weighing around 140 kgs, Raj's obesity had started interfering with his daily activities.

Sleeve gastrectomy involves surgically removing a large part of the stomach, reducing its original size by about 25-30% following which the patient gradually loses weight because of a drop in food intake owing to less appetite.

Raj, a class 8 student is eagerly waiting to lose the extra kilos. "His friends tease him at school. We had considered bariatric surgery when he was ten, but doctors advised us against it as it could affect his physical growth. We enrolled him in a gym and restricted his diet but nothing helped," said Raj's father, a Mulund resident.

In case of surgery among children, the procedure is advised only after the child's bone growth

is complete. "Though Raj was overweight when he first approached us, we did not readily consider him for the surgery. Initially we put him on meal replacement, diet and exercise therapy, but it didn't work," said Dr Abhay Agrawal, laparoscopic bariatric surgeon who operated on Raj. Doctors then conducted bone examination to determine Raj's radiological age. "We considered surgery later because his bone growth was complete," said Dr Agarwal.

However, experts warn against weight-loss surgeries for children in the absence of clear guidelines. At present, surgeons are consulting at least two to three children a week in the age group of 12-16 years wanting to undergo weight loss surgery. "Bariatric surgery is relatively a new concept, we do not have enough data to know the implications of the surgery," said Dr Roy Patankar, bariatric surgeon, Joy Hospital, Chembur.

**HTC**