

AUGUST
OPINIONS

Q. The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority is now letting people submit their gripes via e-mail. What would you do to fix the state's tollways?



"They need to have a high-occupancy lane like they do in other areas. I drive for an airport shuttle and I always have someone else in the car with me. It would save lots of time."

—RON TALLEY, 46, Chicago



"They should get rid of the tolls. Where's the money going anyway? It sure doesn't seem to be going to fix the roads."

—EARLINE JOHNSON, late 40s, Chicago Heights



"They need to do what they do in New Jersey and make people pay only at the exits. The only place there should be a toll is on ramps, that way it keeps a steady pace for the traffic to move—unless it's rush hour."

—BOB "LIMO BOB" STRAUSS, 45, owner of Superstar Limousines and limo driver to numerous celebrities, also owner of some of the world's longest limos

Look for more August Opinions in Showcase, Business and Sports.

More teens get tummies downsized

In surgery, part of stomach is closed to induce weight loss

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD

Amy Topel had tried exercise, weight-loss pills and every diet, real or fad.

But at age 15, the northwest suburban Bartlett girl had reached 260 pounds and a difficult decision: It was time to try surgery.

Operating was scary, but her mother had undergone it and lost 100 pounds—and Amy was tired of classmates' taunts. So in June, the same surgeon shrank Amy's stomach. She's dropped 30 pounds and counting.

Gastric bypass surgery has long been a dramatic solution for obese adults, but more doctors are operating on teenagers, too. Now the first pediatric guidelines are due out soon, and they'll urge doctors to put more limits on teens' surgery than on adults—because nobody yet knows the long-term outcomes of such a radical operation on a still-developing body.

The main recommendations: ♦ To qualify, teens should have obesity-caused problems, either physical or, like Amy, from the stigma of being fat—and a starting weight at least 30 pounds higher than adult candidates.

♦ Don't operate before teens nearly reach their full height potential—usually around age 13 for girls and 15 for boys—because the surgery limits nutrient absorption.

♦ Hospitals should establish a panel of experts in adolescent obesity, psychology and nutrition to evaluate teens' physical and psychological well-being and pick the best candidates.

Surgery will help some teens, but "it made sense to all of us to set the bar a bit higher," says Dr. Thomas Inge of the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, who co-authored the guidelines.

The guidelines have been submitted to a medical journal for publication later this year, and promise to be somewhat controversial.

Some surgeons say there's no reason to be more cautious with teens. After all, heart disease, diabetes and other obesity-related illnesses can take root in childhood.

"There's no doubt surgery is a drastic measure. It is a risk to life. But at times, living with a condition like this obesity—it is a risk to life by itself," says Dr. Constantine Frantides of Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center on the West Side, who operated on Amy.

The operation entails stapling closed part of the stomach. Typically, patients lose 70 to 80 percent of their excess body weight in about a year.

But the surgery itself comes with risks, such as wound infections, the possibility of stomach leaks and occasionally life-threatening blood clots.

Recovered patients must follow rules: They eat small servings, counting to get enough protein.

Gorging causes vomiting. The

"My brain's telling me to eat, my stomach's telling me no."

AMY TOPEL, a Bartlett girl who has had gastric bypass surgery



Amy Topel, 16, on her front porch at her home in Bartlett. Topel had tried exercise, weight-loss pills and every fad diet on TV, but at age 15, she'd reached 260 pounds and a difficult decision: It was time to try surgery. —AP

body no longer processes sugar properly, so too much causes dizziness and diarrhea. Regularly breaking the rules can bring back the weight.

"You name it, I tried it," Amy recalls. "But high school started and kids became mean and I take all my stress out on eating."

Life now is about nutritious rationing; she's learning after half a hamburger one day was enough to make her throw up.

"My brain's telling me to eat, my stomach's telling me no," Amy says. But her friends are "amazed." They say, "You're so skinny!" —AP

Skipping breakfast is fattening, says Kellogg study

BY KIM SEVERSON

People who skip breakfast or fill up on bacon and eggs are likely to be fatter than those who eat a bowl of hot cereal in the morning, a new study reports.

And eating even a pastry will keep you thinner than not eating at all, says the study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*.

"What seems clear is skipping breakfast is not good for you," said Gladys Block, senior author of the study and director of the Public

Health Nutrition Program at the University of California at Berkeley. "It doesn't help you lose weight or maintain a low body weight. It's just the opposite."

Kellogg-USA, the cereal maker, funded the study. And two of the five authors are Kellogg nutritionists. But Block said Kellogg had no control over editorial content and that the university has a strict policy that prevents sponsors from interfering with research results.

Using data from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the researchers

compared what 16,452 Americans ate for breakfast with their body mass index, a formula used to measure ideal weight based on height. The thinnest people ate hot cereal for breakfast, followed closely by cold cereal. The fattest people ate either only dairy products or breakfasts consisting of eggs, meat and potatoes.

The study—which also factored in physical activity and smoking, both factors that can affect body weight—is the first demographically controlled research that shows how different breakfast

foods affect weight.

Exactly which food will help you best control your weight surprised the researchers.

The bacon-and-eggs group consumed the most calories, on average, weighing in with 2,433 calories a day. As a group, they and people who ate only dairy products for breakfast weighed the most. Though bacon and eggs are often part of an Atkins-style low-carbohydrate diet, the researchers said it's unlikely that many of these people were following that diet.

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