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1,332.41

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## Expert group says surgery can help severely obese

\* Surgery should be considered earlier, not as last resort

\* Should be an option for diabetics with BMI of 35 or more

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WASHINGTON, March 28 (Reuters) - A diabetes expert group backed the use of weight-loss surgery on Monday for the treatment of type 2 diabetes in severely obese patients.

According to a statement from the International Diabetes Federation, there is increasing evidence that the health of obese people with type 2 diabetes can benefit substantially from weight-loss surgery under some circumstances.

Type 2 diabetes, which has reached epidemic proportions, is linked strongly with poor diet, lack of exercise and obesity.

Up to a third of U.S. adults could suffer from diabetes by 2050 should Americans continue to gain weight and avoid exercise, according to a projection by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [ID:nN21108202]

"Bariatric surgery for severely obese people with type 2 diabetes should be considered much earlier in management rather than held back as a last resort," said George Alberti, senior research investigator at the Imperial College, London.

"It should be incorporated into type 2 diabetes treatment protocols," he added.

Allergan Inc ([AGN.N](#)) markets an implantable weight-loss device, Lap-Band, which got approval last month for use in patients who are less obese than the patients for which it had been approved. [ID:nN16216221]

The Lap-Band was earlier allowed for adults with a body mass index of at least 40, or at least 35 with one health problem. The range has now been expanded to include adults with a BMI of 30 to 40, and at least one obesity-related problem.

According to the expert group, surgery should be an accepted option in people who have type 2 diabetes and a body mass index of 35 or more.

Other companies trying to develop obesity treatments include Arena Pharmaceuticals Inc ([ARNA.O](#)), Orexigen Therapeutics Inc ([OREX.O](#)) and Vivus Inc ([VVUS.O](#)).

However, the obesity sector has not seen much good news lately, with Abbott Laboratories Inc's ([ABT.N](#)) diet drug Meridia being pulled off the U.S. market and the three experimental drugs facing regulatory hurdles.

Allergan shares were trading up 12 cents at \$69.97 in afternoon trade on the New York Stock Exchange. They touched a high of \$70.20 earlier in the day. (Reporting by Esha Dey, editing by Gerald E. McCormick)

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