

### Fasten Your Seat Belts

by Asgar Ali

I love to fly. There is something exhilarating about flying, an exciting rush when that plane takes off, transporting you to a different place. My wife and I have done quite a bit of traveling. Doing public relations for a Caribbean airline, working for a major US airline and consulting for largest travel agency in the world meant that travel was a big part of my life.

But I dreaded those words, “Fasten Your Seat Belt.” Of course, as my girth increased over the years it became impossible to fasten my seat belt and it was embarrassing to ask for a seat belt extender. So I resorted to subterfuge. I would put a pillow or the blanket over my waist to fool the flight attendants as they walked the aisle to do their safety check. But I couldn’t fudge it when meal time came and I was unable to lower my tray table.

All that disappeared when I flew earlier this April, just eight weeks after my surgery. I had not given it a thought before the flight, but it was brought an extraordinary joy and satisfaction when sitting on the plane I realized that I was able to fasten my seat belt with inches left over. When I lowered my tray table completely, I felt sorry for the poor guy opposite me who was twisting and squirming all through the flight experiences the same weight related discomfort I had for many years.

Since my bariatric surgery, I have had some important realizations. Some five years ago, my niece and her husband both had surgery, primarily to achieve an ideal and healthy weight. They sought to convince me but I felt it was an extreme step just to lose weight. But last year I learned of the impact the surgery would have on my co-morbidities, particularly diabetes and the related deterioration in my eyes. Six months after surgery, my glucose levels are at the point where I may be taken off insulin, my vision has



improved, my sleep apnea has disappeared and my wife tells me I no longer snore. I feel a lot better physically and equally as important I feel a lot better about myself. The only hassle is that I have to keep getting smaller clothes since my waist size keeps dropping so dramatically. I now have the smallest waist among my immediate circle of male relatives and friends.

I believe I have reasons to be pretty pleased with myself but I do have concerns. The biggest one is where I will be next year, two years from now, and so on. That’s the challenge. To ensure this works not merely in the immediate, but in the medium and long term, and that I don’t disastrously fall back into the rut. In this respect, although I recognize it is essentially up to me, I have great confidence in the support mechanisms which surround me. The mandated pre-surgery medical, psychological and nutrition consultations helped to reinforce that surgery was merely a tool to make it a bit easier to meet the constant and never ending weight and medical challenges. The post surgery support in my case included continuous encouragement from my family and friends, plus the comprehensive support program available at Cleveland Clinic.

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## Featured Recipe: Eggbeaters® Southwestern Style Fajita Quiche



### Ingredients

- PAM® Original No-Stick Cooking Spray
- 1/4 pound boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch strips (1/2 pepper = about 1/2 cup)
- 1/2 green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch strips (1/2 pepper = about 1/2 cup)
- 1 small onion, cut into 1-inch strips (1 small = about 1/3 cup)
- 1 cup Egg Beaters® Southwestern Style (1 cup = 8 oz.)
- 1 cup fat free milk
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 cup shredded reduced fat Mexican cheese blend (1 cup = 4 oz.)
- 4 flour tortillas (8 inch)

### Nutrition Facts:

Calories:	162
Protein:	12 grams
Sugar:	3 grams
Total Carbohydrates:	16 grams
Total Fat:	5 grams

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray medium skillet with cooking spray. Heat over medium heat.
2. Add chicken. Cook and stir 3 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink. Stir in bell peppers and onion. Cook and stir 2 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender.
3. Combine Egg Beaters, milk and cumin in large bowl. Add cheese and mix lightly. Stir in chicken mixture.

Spray 9-inch pie plate with cooking spray. Place tortillas in pie plate to form crust, evenly overlapping each other. Carefully pour Egg Beater mixture into tortilla crust. Bake 40 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack 10 minutes before serving. Serve with salsa and fat free sour cream, if desired.

\*This is a Phase V appropriate recipe.

\*\*If following a Phase III, omit the tortilla and vegetables and use plain Eggbeaters®

\*\*If following a Phase IV, omit the tortilla, but keep the vegetables

\*\*Recipe Reference: Eggbeaters® Website accessed at: <http://www.egg-beaters.com/recipes/view.jsp?action=recipe&recipeid=2023&view=view>

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These support mechanisms provide a literal rock to which a Bariatric patient can anchor their quest to make sure that a healthy lifestyle is maintained in the long term.

My new 'family' at the support groups meetings has shared countless pertinent pieces of advice and their own stories are inspirational. It always seems that there is someone who has had a similar experience and has a solution to an issue which develops. The availability of continuing generous psychological and nutritional advice is enormous reassurance that yes, I will do it.

Did we make the right decision? You bet we did.

## Successful Story: Dori Cousley



Having the gastric bypass surgery March 20, 2008 saved my life. I was experiencing so much back pain and taking so many different medications that I could barely walk.

*Since the surgery, I am off all my meds and can walk and even run without pain.*

Run, still hard to believe I can do it. And it is even harder to imagine I have competed in 5K races. I am emotionally, physically and spiritually in such a better place. The best part for me is the happiness that came from all the positive changes in my life. As of today, I am down 135 lbs!



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