Why do I have to have a psychological evaluation?  
Weight loss surgery is a life-changing experience that can be extremely stressful for some people. Our weight loss surgery team cares about you as a person and wants to make sure that the surgery is right for you at this time… not just physically, but also emotionally and in the context of your life situation.

In order for you to have a good surgical outcome, it is important that we identify any potential problems prior to surgery so that these can be addressed. In addition, most insurance companies require a comprehensive psychological evaluation prior to approving payment for weight loss surgery.

Why can't I see my own mental health provider?  
If you are seeing a mental health provider, we would welcome his/her input about your readiness for weight loss surgery. However, as most mental health providers do not have specialized training in this area, our program psychologists will perform the evaluations at St. Luke's Hospital. Our patients get the same evaluation and your surgeon will know the results within 2-3 days. Our psychologists maintain close contact with the other members of the weight loss surgery team in order to better coordinate your care.

What does the evaluation cover?  
Psychologists are required to answer specific questions about you before recommending you for weight loss surgery. These include:

1. Do you understand the procedure and commitment to lifestyle change you are making when you have weight loss surgery?
2. Do you have sufficient knowledge, coping skills and other resources to succeed in changing your lifestyle following surgery?
3. Do you have sufficient social support to achieve a healthy recovery and an improved quality of life following surgery?
4. If you have experienced problems with depression, anxiety, addiction or other psychological problems, are your symptoms under sufficient control and do you have the ability to cope with a major life change?
5. What, if any, additional support is needed to make your surgery successful?
What happens if the psychologist identifies a problem?
If there are major concerns, we will discuss them with you and provide you with options for how to deal with them. Your psychologist will assist you in getting the help you need to prepare you for surgery, either by working with you directly or by making a referral to someone who is an expert in the area of concern.

If the psychologist finds a problem, will this keep me from getting surgery?
Usually not, although your surgery may need to be delayed until the problem is under better control. For some patients, behavioral health counseling or psychological treatment may be recommended. If treatment is indicated, your psychologist will assist you in locating a mental health provider if you do not already have one. Prior to surgery, we may ask that you come back for a follow-up visit to be sure you are ready for weight loss surgery.

How long does the evaluation take?
A psychological evaluation normally takes 3-4 hours. To shorten your time appointment, we are asking you to complete the 1st part of the evaluation on a computer with internet access. If you do not have access at home, you may use a friend’s computer or go to the library. If no one you know has internet access, tell the clerk in the Weight Loss Surgery Center so that other arrangements can be made.

The 1st internet evaluation takes 1-1½ hours. The 2nd part of the evaluation includes a computerized personality test that you will take at St. Luke’s before you see your psychologist; this takes 20-30 minutes to complete. The 3rd part of the evaluation is a face-to-face interview with your psychologist that will last 1-1 ½ hours. The interview will not be scheduled until you have completed the “on line” computer tests. Once the entire evaluation has been completed (all 3 parts), your psychologist will write a report for the surgeon.

What’s in the report my surgeon gets?
The report is a summary of findings from the tests and your interview with your psychologist. It addresses your “readiness” for surgery and may or may not include recommendations for counseling or other support to help prepare you for weight loss surgery. If you have questions about the recommendations, you may ask your psychologist.

How do I complete the computer tests?
Call or e-mail Diane Hack at 212-523-2965 or DHack@chpnet.org to receive an “Access Code”. Once you have your confidential code, you may complete the computer tests by going to: http://www.slrsurgery.org/assessments.html.

At this site, you will see a list of 4 separate assessments. Click once on the Eating & Weight Loss Section and new page will open that asks you to enter your Access Code. After you enter your code, click “continue”. This will open the instruction page for the 1st evaluation. Please complete the assessment and click on “submit” before you leave the site. If you quit before you complete the entire the section, your answers will be lost and you will have to start over. Once you finish and submit a section, you may go on to the next section or take a break or go on to the 3 sections (Behavior, Personality & Substance Use). While it is best to complete all 4 sections at one time, this may not be possible in some instances. Each time you return to the site, you will need to re-enter your code.
If you lose your code, call or e-mail Diane Hack. Do not guess at your code as this may cause us to get your information confused with that of someone else. Your Access Code is private. We use numbers instead of names to protect your identity. Only the weight loss surgery staff has access to your test information.

**When should I take the computer tests?**
Once you have your Access Code, you may “log on” and take the 4 assessments at any time. The sooner you complete the “on line” tests, the sooner we will be able to schedule your personality test and interview with the psychologist. After you complete all 4 online assessments, call or e-mail Diane Hack at 212-523-2965 or DHack@chpnet.org and ask to be scheduled for your psychological interview. The staff will give you the next available appointment. Be advised that 2-3 days before your appointment, your psychologist will log on to review your test results. If the tests have not been completed, your appointment will be cancelled, delaying the entire evaluation process. In addition, you will be charged $180 for a missed appointment.

**What are the tests like?**
The tests are true-false and multiple choice questions about your eating habits and weight history, knowledge of weight loss surgery, behavioral health habits (exercise, sleep, smoking, and stress management) and substance use, including prescription, legal (alcohol, nicotine) and illegal drugs. The personality test asks questions about depression, anxiety, self-esteem and how you relate to others (your personality).

**What’s the face-to-face interview like?**
Several psychologists are on the weight loss surgery team. However, they all collect the same information. During the interview, your psychologist will take a history that includes information about your health, family, lifestyle and support network. Your psychologist also will discuss your reasons for wanting weight loss surgery and your “readiness” to make major behavior changes, both prior to and following surgery. In addition, you will be screened for past and current mental health problems that could affect your recovery.

**What about my privacy?**
Psychological services are confidential except in special circumstances (for example, if you were to tell us you were planning to hurt yourself or someone else). However, because your surgeon requested this information as part of your pre-surgical evaluation, the findings will be shared with the weight loss surgery team. Your insurance company also may require a copy of your psychological evaluation before they approve payment for the surgery. In addition, we often provide a copy of your evaluation to your primary care and/or mental health provider to improve care coordination. You will be asked to sign a release of information before any private medical information is sent outside St. Luke’s-Roosevelt Hospital Center. If you do not want your test results released, please discuss your concerns with your psychologist.

**Can my family participate in the evaluation?**
It is important that you complete the tests on your own. Remember, the answers are about you, not your family member!!! If you have trouble reading or need assistance with working the computer, it is OK to ask someone for help so long as they are not giving you the answers or telling you what your should say.
Some patients prefer to have a family member or friend accompany them to the interview. While family and friends can provide support during the evaluation process, you should know that you will be asked some very personal questions that you may not wish for others to know the answers to. If there is anything you would prefer for a family member or friend not to overhear or, if you think another’s presence will make it harder for you to talk openly or honestly, it might be better to have the interview alone.

**How much does the evaluation cost?**
If everything goes as planned, the charge for the entire evaluation (including all the testing and the interview) will be $300. However, if you are required to return for a 2nd visit due to your coming late or having a very complicated history, there will be an additional charge of $180 per hour to complete the evaluation. Also, if your appointment needs to be cancelled because you did not complete the computer tests before you scheduled your appointment, you will be charged $180 (in addition to the $300). All fees must be paid at time of service by cash, major credit card (Visa or MasterCard only) or money order. We do not take insurance because every insurance company has different requirements, because our psychologists are not on every insurance panel and because the wait to get approval from the insurance companies is lengthy.

**What if the evaluation is for a minor child?**
If the person who is being evaluated for weight loss surgery is under age 18 (i.e., is a minor child), we require a consultation session with the parent or legal guardian to provide supporting background information, as well as to discuss test results and recommendations. Like other counseling sessions associated with the bariatric surgery evaluation process, the cost of the “Family Meeting” is $180. It is expected that this fee will be paid at the time services are delivered.

**What if I have to reschedule or miss an appointment?**
Because several hours are set aside for your appointment, you will be charged $180 for a missed appointment if you fail to cancel 2 full days (48 hours) in advance. In addition, it is very important that you arrive at least 1 full hour before your interview time to register, pay and complete a personality test. If you are late, you may not be seen and will be charged $180 for a missed appointment. Also, if we are unable to complete the assessment due to lateness, you will have to return for a 2nd appointment and will be charged an additional $180 for that service.

**What if I want additional behavioral health or psychological services?**
If you need or desire behavioral health or psychological counseling or medication to help you prepare for surgery or deal with other stresses in your life, you should discuss this with your psychologist at the time of your appointment.

Ongoing services may be able to be billed to your insurance, although our psychologists do not take all insurance types. Some patients are able to see providers of their choice but must pay a higher (out of network) co-pay to do so. If you prefer, we will assist you in finding another mental health provider within the St. Luke’s-Roosevelt Hospital Center or who is closer to home.