

NEWS



Sixty seconds on . . . AspireAssist

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Sounds like a health insurance plan

Nope. It's a controversial new weight loss device from the inventor of the Segway that has just been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration.

Excellent! What is it?

Wearers and readers need a strong stomach—literally. What looks like an overflow pipe is inserted into a tube in the abdomen that has been previously inserted by a doctor. It comes with a little valve that, when turned on, drains food directly from the stomach into the toilet. The device when used as directed removes about 30% of food consumed before it can be digested.

So I can literally have my cake and eat it?

Sounds like it! The results from a trial of 111 patients who used the device for 12 months showed that they lost an average of 12.1% of their body weight, which compared with weight loss of just 3.6% among the 60 patients in the control group.

I'm desperate to squeeze into my bikini this summer. Sign me up now!

Unless you have a body mass index of more than 35 you won't get one. The FDA said that it should not be used for short durations by people who are moderately overweight. It is available in the UK, but I doubt the NHS will be approving it any time soon.

What's been the reaction?

The chat show host Stephen Colbert called it a "barf-bot" and a "pizza drain." When it was launched in 2013 the *Daily Mail* described it as "repulsive."

Sounds like the last days of the Roman empire

According to stories beloved of schoolchildren, Romans would gorge themselves on food, make themselves sick, and then carry on eating. Historians have questioned the veracity of this, but AspireAssist surely marks the end of civilisation as we know it.