

# Some patients do not walk after surgery despite encouragement

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(Medical Xpress) -- Despite the well-documented benefits of walking after surgery, some patients are reluctant to make an attempt even with the encouragement of medical staff. Loyola University Health System researchers reported these findings at the prestigious 38th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society of Gynecologic Surgeons in Baltimore.

Loyola researchers set out to determine if a program that encourages patients to walk after [surgery](#) had a positive effect. However, the study revealed that patients who were encouraged to walk actually recorded of median of 80 steps while those who received routine care without [encouragement](#) took 87 steps. Also, 12 percent of patients in the study did not walk at all during their hospital stay.

“There are many obstacles that can prevent a patient from moving after surgery,” said Maike Liebermann, MD, co-investigator, LUHS. “If a patient cannot walk, this can increase the risk of complications and prolong recovery time and length of hospital stay.”

Obstacles to [walking](#) can include pain, catheters or drains, hospital gowns, IVs and lack of assistance. While further research is needed, the authors found that early discontinuation of catheters and IV fluids and improvement in pain management have the potential to increase walking and overall outcomes for patients after gynecologic surgery.

This study measured steps taken in the 24 hours prior to a patient going home from the hospital. Researchers evaluated 146 patients who

underwent gynecologic surgery who either had routine care with no encouragement to walk or a goal-oriented walking program following surgery. The latter group had signs at the bedside to instruct the health-care providers to encourage the patient to take at least 500 steps prior to discharge. Steps were recorded using a pedometer.

“This was the first study to measure walking after surgery in gynecologic patients,” said Michael Awad, MD, study co-investigator, LUHS. “It demonstrated an easy way for doctors to evaluate a patient’s ability to walk and decide if the patient is ready to go home from the hospital.”

For most [patients](#), walking after surgery is a requirement before they are allowed to leave the hospital. However, there is no guideline to determine the adequate amount of walking after surgery.

The authors concluded that further research must be done to establish standards for walking after gynecologic surgery. They reported that one consideration may be to treat walking as another vital sign, so that it is reported regularly.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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