

Postoperative program prevents respiratory complications: study

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Simple steps counter common side effects of surgery, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—A simple and inexpensive program can reduce the risk of life-threatening and costly respiratory complications that are common after surgery, according to a new study.

Pneumonia and ventilator dependency are among the most common complications that occur after [surgery](#). A postoperative pulmonary program called I COUGH reduces those risks, researchers found.

I COUGH stands for: incentive spirometry; coughing/deep breathing; oral care; understanding (patient and staff education); getting out of bed at least three times daily; head of bed elevation.

The program was developed by a team at the Boston University School of Medicine and assessed for one year at the Boston University Medical Center. I COUGH reduced the risk of pneumonia, unplanned [intubation](#)

and blood clots after surgery.

The study was to be presented Oct. 4 at the American College of Surgeons' annual Clinical Congress in Chicago.

The I COUGH program is automatically ordered for all patients who have had surgery at Boston University Medical Center. The program's goal is to reduce the number of postoperative [respiratory complications](#) in the hospital by at least 50 percent.

"The costs of these serious complications can range from \$18,000 to \$52,000 per event, and we estimate at least \$1 million in savings at our institution from these interventions," study coauthor and I [COUGH](#) co-developer Dr. David McAneny, associate professor of surgery at Boston University School of Medicine, said an ACS news release.

More information: For more on ventilators, visit [the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#).

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