

Obesity complicates lung cancer surgery, study finds

November 30 2012



Greater body-mass index meant more time in operating room.

(HealthDay)—Lung cancer surgery takes longer and is more costly if a patient is obese, a new study shows.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 19,000 U.S. patients who had a portion of lung surgically removed due to lung cancer between 2006 and 2010.

For every 10-unit increase in body-mass index, the time required in the operating room rose by 7.2 minutes. This was true even in hospitals experienced in caring for obese patients, according to the study, which was published in the December issue of the journal [Annals of Thoracic Surgery](#).

Body-mass index (BMI) is a measurement of body fat based on height

and weight. Nearly one-quarter of the patients in this study were obese, defined as having a BMI of 30 or greater.

[Obesity](#) did not increase the risk of dying within 30 days of surgery or increase the length of hospital stay, the researchers noted.

"With operating room costs at \$65 per minute, obesity can become very expensive very quickly," study senior author Dr. Eric Grogan, of Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, said in a journal news release.

Study author Dr. Jamii St. Julien, also of Vanderbilt, said there needs to be a greater emphasis on weight loss and healthy [lifestyle choices](#).

"The fact that we are putting more and more costly resources into caring for obese patients needs to be considered as hospitals and policymakers think of ways to control future [health care costs](#)," St. Julien said in the news release.

The researchers suggested that surgery times could be reduced by creating operating suites with larger rooms, bigger operating tables and longer surgical instruments to accommodate [obese patients](#).

The study contributes to a growing amount of evidence about how obesity affects surgery in general, Dr. David Jones, a professor at the University of Virginia, wrote in an accompanying journal editorial.

"Obesity and [lung cancer](#) are two epidemics that are increasingly appreciated as significant threats to length and quality of life," he wrote. "This paper supports the need to more thoroughly examine how obesity impacts health care and resource allocation, particularly in the surgical population."

The obesity rate in the United States rose from 21 percent in 2001 to 34 percent in 2008.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [overweight and obesity](#).

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Citation: Obesity complicates lung cancer surgery, study finds (2012, November 30) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-11-obesity-complicates-lung-cancer-surgery.html>

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