

Complications more likely with emergency gallbladder surgery: study

July 3 2013



Staying on top of symptoms may allow safer, planned procedures, researchers say.

(HealthDay)—Emergency gallbladder surgery carries a higher risk of complications than planned surgery, a new study finds.

Researchers analyzed data from nearly 600 [gallbladder](#) surgeries performed over eight months at a large hospital in a U.S. city, and found that 22 patients had a total of 35 complications. Eighteen of the patients had [emergency surgery](#). More than 90 percent of the night-time surgeries were emergency procedures.

Having surgery after 7 p.m. and being an older male were both associated with an increased risk of complications.

The study was too small to generalize the findings or show a cause-and-effect relationship. However, further research into the issue is warranted, said lead investigator Dr. Uma Phatak, a surgery resident at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth).

The findings were presented at the recent annual meeting of the Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, in Orlando, Fla. The data and conclusions should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Identifying at-[risk patients](#) sooner might be one way to reduce [gallbladder surgery](#) complication rates. By the time some patients undergo surgery, there is scarring on the gallbladder that can lead to complications, Phatak said.

"It is hard to know if you have a serious gallbladder problem," study co-author Dr. Curtis Wray, an assistant professor of [surgery](#), said in a UTHealth news release. "Repeated episodes of upper-right abdominal pain should prompt medical attention. Ignoring these [warning signs](#) may lead to a more difficult operation in the future."

Many gallbladder problems are caused by gallstones, which can temporarily block the ducts that drain the gallbladder and the liver.

Symptoms of gallbladder problems include nausea, vomiting and pain in the upper-right abdomen that is not relieved by changing positions or by taking over-the-counter medications. Symptoms typically occur several hours after eating and may last one to four hours.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [gallstones](#).

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Citation: Complications more likely with emergency gallbladder surgery: study (2013, July 3) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-07-complications-emergency-gallbladder-surgery.html>

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