

# Air travel safe after chest surgery, surgeon says

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Whether flying or driving home, study finds similar complication rates.

(HealthDay)—If you're returning home after having chest surgery at an out-of-town hospital, flying is as safe as driving, an expert says.

It's widely believed that ground travel is safer than air travel after chest surgery, but a study by Mayo Clinic thoracic surgeon Dr. Stephen Cassivi found that isn't true. He also concluded there is no reason to wait for weeks after chest surgery to fly home.

"In general, travel after surgery can be done if it's well-organized and thought out ahead of time," he said in a Mayo news release.

Cassivi found that chest surgery patients heading home by air or by car had a similar low risk for complications such as pneumonia, blood clots

and collapsed lung.

"And that speaks to a very important question that's often managed by dogma or urban myth, hospital myth. We found that although it's not a zero risk, the risk is low, and the risk is the same between ground and [air travel](#)," Cassivi noted.

The old rules of staying put after your surgery for two to four weeks before flying home may not apply, he added. "And I think it opens the door for patients and their surgeons to look seriously at their individual situations and govern travel decisions by how well they're doing," he said.

Cassivi presented the study in Toronto in April at the annual meeting of the American Association for Thoracic Surgery.

He offered the following tips for traveling home after surgery:

- Don't [travel](#) alone.
- To reduce the risk of [blood clots](#), walk every hour during your trip and drink plenty of water.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing.
- If you have problems getting enough oxygen, consider traveling with a portable oxygen tank.

The data and conclusions of research presented at meetings is typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

**More information:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [surgery](#).

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