

Study finds gallbladder surgery can wait

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Laparoscopic cholecystectomy, a minimally invasive procedure to remove the gallbladder, is one of the most common abdominal surgeries in the U.S. Yet medical centers around the country vary in their approaches to the procedure with some moving patients quickly into surgery while others wait.

In a study published online Monday in the *American Journal of Surgery*, researchers found gallbladder removal surgery can wait until regular working hours rather than rushing the patients into the operating room at night.

"The urgency of removing the gallbladder is a topic of much debate among medical professionals," said Dennis Kim, MD, a Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute (LA BioMed) lead researcher and author of the study. "We found patients who underwent the surgery during normal working hours were more likely to have the minimally [invasive surgical procedure](#) than those undergoing the procedure at night. Those undergoing nighttime surgeries – to a greater extent – experienced more invasive gallbladder removal."

The gallbladder is a pear-shaped organ on the upper right side of the abdomen that collects and stores bile, a digestive fluid produced by the liver. Gallbladders may need to be removed from patients who suffer pain from gallstones that block the flow of bile.

In a laparoscopic cholecystectomy, surgeons insert a [tiny video camera](#) and special surgical tools through small incisions in the abdomen to

remove the gallbladder. Occasionally, surgeons may need to create a large incision to remove the [gallbladder](#), and this is known as an open cholecystectomy.

For the *American Journal of Surgery*, the researchers conducted a retrospective study of 1,140 patients at two large urban referral centers who underwent [gallbladder removal](#) surgeries. They found 11% of the surgical procedures performed at night (7 a.m.-7 p.m.) were converted to the more invasive procedure, open cholecystectomies. Only 6% of those who underwent the surgery during the day required the more invasive form of [surgery](#).

The researchers found no significant differences in the length of stay or complication rates. But they said the complication rates were difficult to measure because of the lack of follow-up records for the [patients](#) after they left the hospital.

Provided by Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor

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