

Encouraging surgical ICU patients to get moving pays off

September 30 2016



(HealthDay)—Getting out of bed and moving around as soon as possible

benefits surgical intensive care unit patients, a new study shows.

Among 200 surgical ICU patients in the United States, Germany and Austria, those encouraged to move around sooner than usual were discharged from the ICU and the hospital earlier than others, researchers found.

"We have become much more successful in making sure patients hospitalized after serious injury or major surgery survive their stays in surgical ICUs," said study leader Dr. Matthias Eikermann, of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

"But many patients who spend a long time in the ICU develop muscle weakness that can lead to prolonged rehabilitation requirements, with some being unable to walk or take care of themselves up to a year after hospital discharge," he said in a hospital news release.

Setting daily goals for each patient is a key element of the new protocol. With this program, patients not only left the hospital sooner, they needed less help when they were discharged, Eikermann said.

The study looked at 104 surgical ICU patients assigned to early mobilization, and 96 who received standard care after surgery. The results appear in the Oct. 1 issue of *The Lancet*.

"While our study did not measure hospital costs, our data demonstrating improvement in patient outcomes, along with reduced hospital and ICU length of stay, suggest that implementing this program should improve the value of care," Eikermann added.

Massachusetts General and some of the other hospitals participating in the study have begun to implement the [early mobilization](#) program, he said.

"We predict that other hospitals will make strong efforts to implement this new approach," Eikermann said.

More information: The U.K. National Health Service has more on [recovery after surgery](#).

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Citation: Encouraging surgical ICU patients to get moving pays off (2016, September 30)
retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-09-surgical-icu-patients.html>

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