

'Broken heart syndrome' warrants careful monitoring

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(HealthDay)—It's not a heart attack, but so-called "broken heart

syndrome" still puts patients at high risk for hospital readmission and in-hospital death, a new study suggests.

Broken [heart syndrome](#)—also called Takotsubo syndrome—causes symptoms similar to a [heart attack](#), including chest pain and difficulty breathing.

But while a heart attack is caused by severely blocked arteries, [broken heart syndrome](#) is typically brought on by stressful events and involves sudden weakening of the heart muscle.

Although the syndrome is thought to be temporary, the study found subsequent heart problems were not uncommon.

"Takotsubo [patients](#) should be given a detailed discharge plan and counseled on potential reasons to revisit their doctor, such as difficulty breathing or swelling of the legs," said the study's co-lead investigator, Dr. Nathaniel Smilowitz. He's an assistant professor of medicine at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York City.

"These are very sick patients who need close follow-up," Smilowitz said in a hospital news release.

The researchers analyzed data from more than 61,400 people hospitalized with broken heart syndrome. They found that 12 percent were rehospitalized within 30 days of discharge. Of those, nearly 4 percent died after readmission.

Among heart attack patients, the rates were 17 percent and 7 percent, respectively, according to the study.

"Our findings show that Takotsubo syndrome still presents considerable risk to patients after they're initially discharged from the hospital," said

senior investigator Dr. Harmony Reynolds, an associate professor of medicine at NYU Langone.

"Even though the heart muscle recovers full function in survivors, there are lasting effects on the body. Physicians should monitor Takotsubo patients carefully," Reynolds said.

The researchers noted that the most common cause of hospital readmission among patients with broken heart syndrome was heart failure. It was diagnosed in 11 percent of broken heart syndrome patients and in 13 percent of heart attack patients.

The study also found that compared to heart attack patients, broken heart syndrome patients were younger and more likely to be women. They also had fewer risk factors for heart disease, such as diabetes and obesity, but were more likely to have other non-cardiac illnesses such as depression, rheumatoid arthritis, or chronic pulmonary disease.

The findings were published online Oct. 2 in the *European Heart Journal—Quality of Care and Clinical Outcomes*.

More information: The American Heart Association has more on [broken heart syndrome](#).

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