

Anesthesia complications drop by half, study finds

12 October 2014



Rate of serious problems was highest in patients over 50.

(HealthDay)—Anesthesia-related complications in the United States have fallen by more than half, while the overall death rate has remained the same, a new study indicates.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 3.2 million cases of anesthesia use between 2010 and 2013, and found the rate of [complications](#) decreased from 11.8 percent to 4.8 percent. The most common minor complication was nausea and vomiting (nearly 36 percent) and the most common major complication was medication error (nearly 12 percent).

"Our goal was to determine the nature and incidence of [surgical complications](#) at the national level and to identify their risk factors," study author Dr. Jeana Havidich, an associate professor of anesthesiology at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire, said in an ASA news release.

"Previous studies examined adverse events for specific surgical procedures, types of anesthesia or patient populations. This is the first time we've been able to look at such a large amount of data on a national level," Havidich said.

The death rate remained at three deaths per 10,000 surgeries/procedures involving anesthesia, according to the study that was to be presented Sunday at the American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) annual meeting in New Orleans.

Among the other findings: complication rates were not higher among [patients](#) who had evening or holiday procedures; patients older than 50 had the highest rates of serious complications; and healthier patients having elective daytime surgery had the highest rates of minor complications.

Research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine suggests questions to ask about [anesthesia](#).

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APA citation: Anesthesia complications drop by half, study finds (2014, October 12) retrieved 9 November 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-anesthesia-complications.html>

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