

Having heart disease can make other surgeries more risky

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(HealthDay)—Heart patients may face a greater chance of cardiovascular complications after having major surgery that doesn't involve the heart, new research suggests.

Twenty percent of these patients experienced heart troubles within a year of such surgery, the researchers found.

"Our study reveals a greater likelihood of having [heart problems](#) or dying after noncardiac surgery than has been recognized to date," said study author Dr. Christian Puelacher, from the University of Basel in Switzerland. "Patients are also at risk for a longer period than was previously thought."

The study included people aged 65 to 85, and those aged 45 to 64 with heart disease. The patients all had noncardiac surgery—visceral, orthopedic, trauma, vascular, urologic, spinal and thoracic—that required them to stay in the hospital for at least one night.

After surgery, the 2,265 patients were followed-up for one year for heart attacks, heart failure, heart rhythm disorders and death due to [heart disease](#). Blood tests for troponin—a protein that's elevated in the blood when the heart muscle is injured—were used to check for asymptomatic heart attacks.

About one in seven patients (15%) had at least one heart complication within 30 days. The 30-day incidence of heart complications was highest in patients who had [thoracic surgery](#) (22%), followed by vascular surgery (21%) and trauma surgery (19%). One in five patients (21%) had at least one heart complication within one year.

The findings were published Oct. 15 in the *European Heart Journal—Acute Cardiovascular Care*.

"This was one of the first studies to monitor patients for asymptomatic heart attacks after

surgery," Puelacher noted in a journal news release.

"These patients were at greater risk of subsequent events. One-third of patients who had an asymptomatic heart attack went on to have at least one more heart complication, compared to just 10% of those who did not have an asymptomatic [heart attack](#)," he said.

"Our study suggests that measuring troponin levels before surgery and for two days afterwards could identify these patients and provide an opportunity to prevent further complications and death," Puelacher added.

The researchers didn't investigate what patients can do to improve their outcomes.

"Surgery is a process rather than a quick fix. Do not postpone your surgery, but if there is time and you want to prepare, quit smoking, be physically active and eat healthily so your body is in better shape," Puelacher said.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine offers tips on [getting healthy before surgery](#).

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