

## Surgery complications: What to be aware of and how to prevent them

When an illness leads to surgery, it can be a very frightening and difficult experience. Even with the modern advances that reduce recovery times and make patients more comfortable, complications still can occur.

**According to one report, about 10% of all spinal fusions paid for by Medicare in 2011 were unnecessary, either because they had no medical basis or because doctors did not explore non-surgical treatment options.<sup>1</sup>**

The most common complications vary from surgery to surgery and patient to patient. Most complications are minor and resolved quickly and easily in the days following an operation. But for some patients, surgery can lead to more serious types of problems, such as pneumonia or an infection.<sup>2</sup>

"Wound infection is probably the most common universal complication," **according to David Brooks, MD, a Boston surgeon who serves as one of our medical experts.**

"Additionally, particularly for older patients, myocardial infarction, pulmonary embolus, and pneumonia are the most typical complications," he added.

Complications from general surgery can include:

- Pain
- Blood clots
- Side effects of anesthesia, such as drowsiness or disorientation
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pneumonia
- Muscle loss

Doctors agree that the best way to avoid complications is to prepare yourself for surgery and live a healthy, preventative lifestyle. This includes smoking cessation, reduced alcohol consumption, good nutrition, and a consistent exercise program.

"The available evidence now says that non-surgical treatment is as good, if not better than, surgical treatment," **says Dr. Mayhew, leading sports injury specialist and one of our medical experts.**

Before planning or scheduling an operation, it's important to be clear on your diagnosis and treatment plan, and if surgery is the best option for you. Talk to your physician about the likelihood of surgical complications, and be sure to take advantage of your Best Doctors health benefit. Our world-renowned specialists can review your case and provide clarity and peace of mind if you have doubts about a diagnosis, treatment plan, or question the need for surgery.

Getting an accurate diagnosis and the right treatment for your condition can make a huge difference in reducing pain, restoring mobility, and improving a person's quality of life.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/06/18/unnecessary-surgery-usatoday-investigation/2435009/>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.verywellhealth.com/know-the-most-common-complications-after-surgery-3157301>

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