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Medical Breakthrough -- Surgery Gone Wrong!

There are 40-million surgeries in the United States each year.

But what's supposed to make you better can sometimes kill you.

This year, about 15-hundred people will leave the operating room with a surgical instrument left in their body.

Sometimes it does no harm, but in some cases the consequences are deadly.

Surgery Gone Wrong!

Last year, Lenny LeClair went to the hospital for "routine" surgery. But he left the operating room much worse than he came in.

"I never stopped throwing up," he says.

Lenny lost 100 pounds!

"I thought I was dying. I felt like I was dying," says Lenny.

When doctors realized what was wrong Lenny was almost dead. It turned out they left behind a gauze sponge that had pierced his colon.

"It was like a septic tank in there," says Lenny.

Sponges and instruments can get left behind during surgery because they're often covered in blood and hard to spot. And hospital staff sometimes miscounts -- easy to do in emergency situations where seconds count.

"Basically, the counting procedures for instruments and sponges is the same as it was 40 years ago. And we're trying to use 21st century technology to help people keep track of supplies in the operating room," says Dr. Alex Macario, an Anesthesiologist at Stanford School of Medicine in Palo Alto, California.

That technology is this -- radio frequency i-d tags. In a new study, doctors attached them to surgical sponges and then waved a wand over a patient after surgery. 100-percent of the time, it alerted the doctor if a sponge was left.

"What we're interested in now is how to make it more foolproof so that it's not dependent on the personnel in the operating room to do the scan correctly every time on every patient," says Dr. Macario.

And once doctors do that, they hope they can keep what happened to Lenny from ever happening to you.

Lenny is still recovering and going through more surgeries, and he's in the middle of a lawsuit.

Dr. Macario hopes build the technology into operating rooms in the future.

Other surgical instruments -- like scissors -- are sometimes left behind, but in most cases it's sponges.

Log on to www.ivanhoe.com for more information.

Watch the latest Medical Breakthrough every Monday, Wednesday and Friday on NewsChannel 8 at 5 and every Monday and Wednesday on NewsChannel 8 at 10.



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