

# Heart surgery can induce menstruation

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A new study may offer some reassurance to women of childbearing age who are facing heart surgery. The unexpected menstrual bleeding that these women often experience does not constitute a risk, as many of them fear.

An upcoming heart surgery can be a tough mental strain. This situation can be so stressful that it can induce menstruation in women of childbearing age.

A new study shows that a majority of the young female patients at a Danish hospital had their periods during the four days they are typically hospitalised for surgery. This happened to no less than 60 percent of the women.

"This figure came as a big surprise to me," says Vibeke Elisabeth Hjortdal, a clinical professor at Aarhus University Hospital's Department of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery, who conducted the study.

Out of 22 women aged between 17 and 60, 13 had unexpected menstrual bleeding during admission or during the operation itself. Four of the women had their periods 1-7 days early, four had their periods 8-14 days early, three had them 1-7 days too late, while two had their periods despite having had their period within the past two weeks.

## **Blood loss extra critical during surgery**

Hjortdal designed the small study after having been approached by colleagues overseas, who were concerned about women in the menstrual phase perhaps being at risk of losing too much blood during surgery.

This bleeding did not only come from the abdomen; the body may also tend to bleed more from the surgical wound during this phase of the menstrual cycle.

Great blood loss is even more critical during heart surgery than in other forms of surgery, since blood-thinning drugs are given during surgery.

## **Blood levels were normal after menstruation**

The thought of losing more blood than expected during surgery can be a cause of great worry for the patients. However, the study suggests that this worry is unfounded.

The women who had unexpected menstruation reported that their bleeding was no heavier than normal.

During surgery, the doctors also measured whether the menstruating women lost more blood than a control group which did not menstruate. Here, too, they found that the menstruating women had normal blood loss.

Last, but not least, the menstruating women's haemoglobin count was normal after surgery.

Hjortdal believes that her study can be used to calm female patients who have unexpected menstruation just before, during or after heart surgery.

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[Read the Danish version of this article at videnskab.dk](#) [9]

 [Menstruation immediately before or after heart surgery is a frequent concern for patients. However, a new study suggests that this does not affect the patient's haemoglobin count. \(Photo: Colourbox\)](#) [10]  
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Dann Vinther

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