

PULMONARY EMBOLISM

What is Pulmonary Embolism?

Pulmonary Embolism occurs when there is a sudden blockage in an artery of the lung. This blockage is usually caused by a blood clot, which most of the time originates in the legs. (DVT--Deep Vein Thrombosis). Air, fat, or clustered tumor cells may also be a cause for the blockage.

Pulmonary Embolism can cause permanent damage to the lungs and/or other organs, lower oxygen levels in the blood, or death.

What Are the Risk Factors/Causes?

1. Prolonged bed rest
2. Oral contraceptive use
3. Surgery
4. Childbirth
5. Massive trauma
6. Burns
7. Cancer
8. Stroke
9. Heart attack
10. Fractures of hips or legs
11. Obesity
12. Long periods of inactivity(long car or plane rides)

What are the Symptoms?

1. Sudden Shortness of Breath
2. Chest Pain with Breathing
3. Coughing up Blood
4. Rapid breathing and/or increased heart rate
5. Anxiety
6. Fainting (syncope)
7. Patient May Not Have Symptoms

What are the Symptoms of DVT (blood clot in the leg)?

1. Swelling of leg
2. Pain/tenderness in leg
3. Feeling of warmth in leg
4. Redness or discoloration of the skin on affected leg

How is it Diagnosed?

1. Spiral CAT scan of Chest
2. V/Q Scan (Pulmonary Ventilation/Perfusion Scan)

What is the Treatment?

Pulmonary Embolism is treated with anti-coagulants.

How is it prevented?

1. Wear compression stockings
2. Walk aisle on long flights (at least once every hour)
3. Stop at least every 2 hours on car trips (stretch legs)
4. Stay active following a surgery or a prolonged illness
5. Take medication as prescribed
6. Follow up with physician regularly

