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Pulmonary Emboli (PE)

What is a PE or pulmonary emboli?

PE is a serious medical condition where a clump of material (emboli) clogs a lung artery blocking blood

flow to lung tissue.

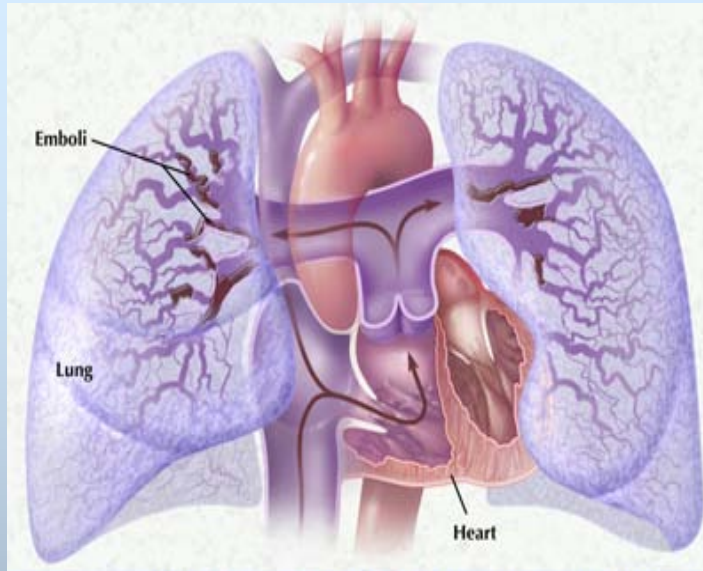
What are some common symptoms or things you might notice?

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Cough (bloody or blood-streaked)
- Wheezing
- Leg swelling or pain
- Excessive sweating

Diagnosis

Other life threatening illness must be excluded including heart attacks, pneumonia, and heart beat abnormalities. The confirmation of a PE can be determined by a CT scan or V/Q scan (nuclear medicine

test). A Ventilation/perfusion looks at how you lungs are getting blood and which parts are getting air. The imaging method will vary based on location,



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Causes of PE

Most commonly the clump of material is a blood clot originating in the deep veins of the legs. This is called deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Other substances that may cause blockage are not as common but include fat from a broken bone, tumor tissue or air bubbles.

Testing May Include

- Blood test (D-dimer)
- Chest X-ray
- EKG (electrical tracing of heart)
- Ultrasound of legs
- CT (Cat scan) of chest
- V/Q scan (nuclear medicine test)



Pulmonary Emboli

RISK FACTORS

Anyone can develop blood clots but things that increase your risk:

- Prolonged immobility
- Bed rest
- Long trips

- Older age
- Family history
- Surgery
- Smoking
- Being overweight
- High blood pressure
- Cancer

Treatment

- 1st injectable blood thinner (heparin)
- 2nd oral blood thinner (warfarin)
- oxygen and sedatives if needed
- If clot is large enough may use clot busting drugs (thrombolytics for removal)

Patient Resources:

1. Mayo Clinic:
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/pulmonary-embolism/DS00429>
2. JAMA patient page:
<http://jama.ama-assn.org/content/295/2/240.full.pdf>
3. America Heart Association
www.americanheart.org