YOU HAVE A PE PULMONARY EMBOLISM

WHAT IS PE?

- A PE is a blood clot that most commonly starts in a vein and then moves into the lung.

WHY ARE PEs IMPORTANT?

- They can cause short term and long-term breathing problems.
- They can sometimes cause death.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF PE?

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Less commonly – feeling faint or passing out, coughing up blood, upper back pain
- A rapid heartbeat
- Be aware of symptoms of blood clots in the legs, called deep vein thrombosis (DVT):
  - Swelling – usually of one leg
  - Pain in the calf, inner thigh or groin
  - Redness and warmth of the affected leg

WHAT CAN CAUSE A PE?

PE usually comes from a DVT of the leg (the risk factors are the same for both).

Immobility

- Being in bed for a few days or more
- Cast on the leg, not able to stand or walk
- Air travel for 6 or more hours

Injury to blood vessels

- Broken bones, accidents
- Major surgery

"Hypercoagulability" (tendency to clot)

- Medical conditions (such as cancer)
- Hormones (estrogen, pregnancy)
- Genetic risk factors/family history of DVT/PE

  Ask your doctor about other risk factors.

TREATMENT

- PE is treated with anticoagulants ("blood thinners")
- Usually pills, but you may start on injections first
- How long you are on treatment will depend on your risk of having another blood clot and your risk of bleeding, but is usually at least 3 months

- Treatment is sometimes long term
- Main side effect is bleeding:
  - Minor (nose/gum bleeds, bruising)
  - Major (coughing blood, blood in vomit, urine or stool [may appear as bright red blood or black / tarry stool])

TAKE AWAY MESSAGE

- PE is serious and can lead to life threatening complications
- Anticoagulant treatment should be taken regularly the way your doctor tells you (refer to the Thrombosis Canada website)
- Tell your doctor if you have new symptoms of a blood clot or major bleeding