



Thrombosis Canada



Thrombose Canada

You Have a PE

Pulmonary Embolism

What is a PE?

A PE is a blood clot that 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 can cause 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 PE/DVT

Ask your doctor about other risk factors.

Treatment

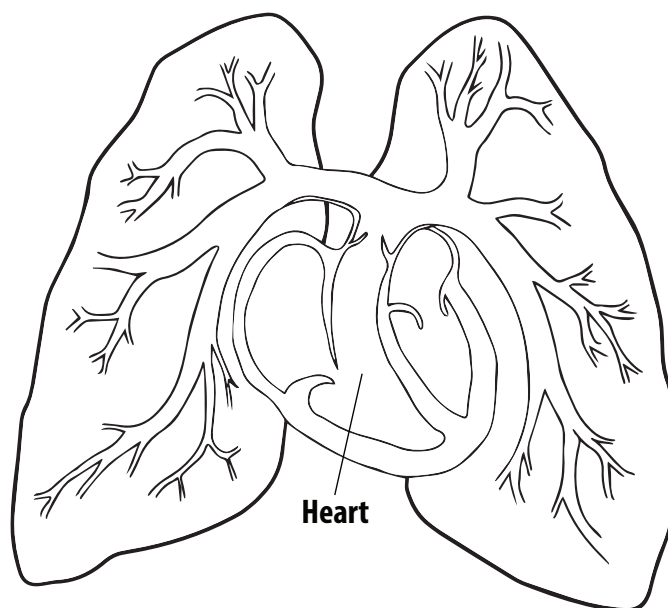
- PE is treated with anticoagulants ("blood thinners")
- Usually pills, but you may start on injections first
- How long you are on treatment will depend on your risk of another blood clot and your risk of bleeding, but is usually at least 3 months
- Treatment is sometimes long term
- Main side effect is bleeding:
 - Minor (nose/gum bleeds, bruising)
 - Major (coughing blood, blood in vomit, urine or stool, black 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
- Tell your doctor if you have new symptoms of blood clot or major bleeding

What are symptoms of PE?

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain with breathing
- Less commonly – feeling faint or passing out, coughing up blood, upper back pain
- Be aware of symptoms of DVT:
 - Swelling – usually of one leg
 - Pain in the calf, inner thigh or groin
 - Redness and warmth of the affected leg



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