FACT SHEET ABOUT
BLOOD CLOTS IN THE LUNGS
PULMONARY EMBOLISM (PE)

Q. What is a pulmonary embolism?
   A. A mass of blood clumped together to form a clot that suddenly
      obstruct blood flow in the lung, this is a life threatening disorder

Q. What are some risk factors for developing them?
   A. These include:
      ~ Immobility such as long car rides or bedrest
      ~ Damage to a vein
      ~ History of blood clot in leg (deep vein thrombosis)
      ~ Inherited conditions in which the blood abnormally clots
      ~ Pregnancy-6 weeks after pregnancy is a risky time for developing a
        Pulmonary Embolism
      ~ Advanced age
      ~ Obesity
      ~ Birth control pills
      ~ Hormone replacements

Q. What are some signs and symptoms to look for?
   A. These signs and symptoms are:
      ~ Usually occurs suddenly
      ~ Unexplained shortness of breath
      ~ Chest pain
         o Gets worse with a deep breath or coughing
         o Can be: sharp, stabbing, burning, aching, dull, heavy
      ~ Coughing up blood
      ~ Less specific signs include:
         ~ -anxiety/feeling of dread
         ~ -sweating
         ~ -increased heart rate
         ~ -increased respiratory rate
         ~ -low blood pressure
         ~ -fainting/light headedness/dizziness
         ~ -wheezing
         ~ -clammy skin
         ~ -bluish color to nail beds and lips (cyanosis)
Non verbal signs may include:
~ Grabbing/clutching at chest
~ Increase of/emergence of new behaviors
~ Suddenly stopping an activity
~ Breathing is shallow
~ Holding onto objects

Q. What should be done next?
A. Call EMS -911

Q. What are some important tips on caring for someone with a Pulmonary Embolism?
A. These include:
   ~ Encourage to take ordered medications/ follow-up with ordered labwork- especially for medications that can prevent future clots
   ~ Exercise lower legs (ROM) if sitting for awhile
   ~ If undergoing surgery-follow MD’s post-op orders-especially follow the ones for therapy, exercise and getting out of bed
   ~ Weight loss-this could lower risk for getting a blood clot

Follow agency policy.

Source: APS HCQU PowerPoint Presentation – “Blood Clots”

For more information on this or any other physical or behavioral health topic, please call the APS HCQU office at 888-321-5861 or visit our website at www.hcqu.apshealthcare.com.

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