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# Pulmonary Embolism

Patient name: \_\_\_\_\_ Admission: \_\_\_\_\_

NRS  
DATE INITIAL

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- I. **The client/caregiver can define pulmonary embolism.**
  - A. It is an obstruction in the blood vessel of a lung.
  - B. The obstruction prevents blood flow to a portion of the lung.
  - C. Without adequate blood supply, the lung cannot function properly, and lung tissue may be destroyed.
  
- II. **The client/caregiver can list factors that may cause pulmonary embolism.**
  - A. Recent surgery (such as major joint replacement surgery)
  - B. Immobility or prolonged bedrest
  - C. Increased levels of clotting factor
  - D. Smoking
  - E. Obesity
  - F. Pregnancy and childbirth
  - G. Birth control pills
  - H. Family history
  - I. Pacemakers
  - J. Fractures and injury
  - K. Some medical conditions (certain cancers, heart disease, and inflammatory bowel disease)
  
- III. **The client/caregiver can recognize signs and symptoms.**
  - A. Symptoms are
    - Sudden shortness of breath (active or at rest)
    - Chest pain similar to pain with a heart attack that will not ease with rest
    - Excessive sweating
    - Rapid heartbeat
    - Lightheadedness or fainting
    - Wheezing
    - Clammy or bluish color to skin
    - Leg swelling
    - Weak pulse
  
- IV. **The client/caregiver can list measures to prevent pulmonary embolism.**
  - A. Promote good circulation.
    1. Exercise regularly especially leg exercises with rest periods.

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2. When traveling, move lower legs and feet while sitting. Change position as able.
  3. Wear antiembolism stockings.
  4. Avoid crossing legs or sitting for long periods of time.
  5. Avoid constrictive clothing.
- B. Avoid nicotine.
  - C. Increase fluid intake to at least six to eight glasses per day.
  - D. Take medication as prescribed.
  - E. Follow general safety precautions to prevent injury.
  - F. Avoid laxatives because they affect vitamin K absorption.
  - G. Keep follow-up appointments with physician.
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- V. **The client/caregiver is aware of possible complications.**
  - A. Pulmonary infarction (death of lung tissue)
  - B. Pulmonary hypertension
  - C. Heart failure
  - D. Collapse of lung
  - E. Shock
  - F. Cardiopulmonary arrest (heart stops)

## RESOURCES

American Lung Association  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

American Heart Association  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

## REFERENCES

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