

## **Definition**

Pulmonary embolism happens when there is blockage in one or more arteries of the lungs – usually caused by a blood clot. This blood clot, called an embolus, is a clot from the other parts of the body, commonly from the legs and travels to the lungs.

## **Symptoms**

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Cough
- Wheezing
- Clammy or bluish-colored skin
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Lightheadedness

## **Risk factors**

Since pulmonary embolism is caused by clots, risk factors include those that lead to the development of blood clots.

- Prolonged immobility – bed rest, long journeys
- Age - Older people are at higher risk of developing clots.
- Family history
- Surgery – especially joint replacements of the hip and knee
- Lifestyle – smoking, being overweight, taking pills

## **Treatment**

- Medications – anticoagulants, thrombolytics
- Surgical and other procedures – clot removal, surgery

## **QUESTIONS**

- What causes pulmonary embolism?
- What health teachings can you give to your patient to prevent having pulmonary embolism? Give at least 4.
- You are taking care of a patient who is immobilized. What interventions should you do to prevent the patient from developing pulmonary embolism? Give at least 3.