Hemoptysis

Hemoptysis is coughing up blood from your airway. The most common cause of hemoptysis is the least serious. It is usually a ruptured small blood vessel caused by coughing and/or infection. Hemoptysis may also be a sign of a more serious problem, like cancer or other types of lung disease. You should always contact a caregiver if you develop hemoptysis. **This is important**, as even mild cases of hemoptysis may lead to serious breathing problems depending on the cause of the bleeding.

Your caregiver will perform tests to find out if the bleeding is coming from your lungs.
Some of these tests may include:

- A CT scan - a specialized x-ray that gives more information than the standard chest x-ray.
- A bronchoscopy - a procedure for looking into the lungs with a specialized instrument like a small telescope.
- Pulmonary angiography may be done if there is a chance that the underlying cause is related to a *vascular disorder* (a blood vessel disorder). Angiography is a specialized x-ray procedure that looks at the vessels in the lungs. Angiography produces a picture called an "angiogram". It requires injecting a dye into the blood vessels. This makes them easier to see.

TREATMENT

- Treatment for hemoptysis depends on the cause. It also depends on the quantity of blood. Infrequent, mild hemoptysis usually does not require specific, immediate treatment.
- It is important that the cause of hemoptysis be found and treated as there is no way to predict whether or not a patient with mild hemoptysis will experience large, life-threatening bleeding.
- Major bleeding is a medical emergency. Steps are usually taken to find the source and stop the bleeding.
- About one third of cases of hemoptysis do not have an evident cause. In these cases treatment can be conservative and monitored for at least 2 or 3 years after the initial diagnosis. If a person has a normal chest x-ray and bronchoscopy, the hemoptysis usually clears within 6 months.
- In longstanding hemoptysis, the treatment is dependent on the *symptoms* (problems) and causes. Sometimes all that is needed are different *antibiotics* (medications that kill germs). Sometimes more aggressive treatment may be needed.
- Treatment of mild to moderate hemoptysis in patients who have chronic bronchitis, bronchiectasis, or tuberculosis usually involves antibiotics. For cancer of the lung, treatment depends on the stage of the cancer.

SEE YOUR CAREGIVER:

- For follow-up care as directed.
- If your symptoms are not improving or are getting worse.
- If you have any other questions or concerns.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You begin to cough up large amounts of blood.
- You develop problems with your breathing.
- You begin vomiting blood or see blood in your stool.
- You develop chest pain.
- You feel faint or pass out.
- You develop a fever over 102º F (38.9º C), or as your caregiver suggests.

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