

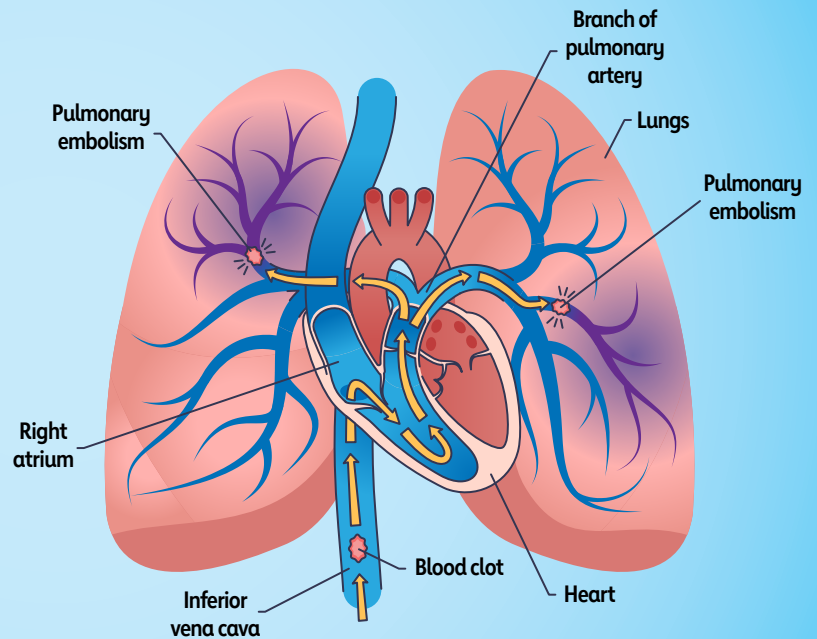


American
Heart
Association.

What Is a Pulmonary Embolism?

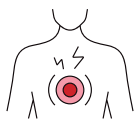
A pulmonary embolism (PE) occurs when a blood clot, usually from a deep vein in the leg or pelvis, breaks loose and travels to the lungs. The clot blocks one or more arteries in the lungs, reducing blood flow and making it harder for the body to get oxygen.

An acute PE means the blockage happens suddenly and requires urgent medical attention.

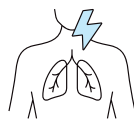


Some people with a PE may not have noticeable symptoms.

For others, signs and symptoms may include:



Chest pain that may worsen with deep breathing or coughing



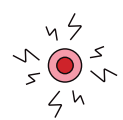
Sudden or unexplained shortness of breath at rest or with exertion



Cough, sometimes with blood-streaked mucus



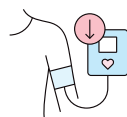
Light-headedness, dizziness or fainting



Signs of shock, such as confusion, cold or clammy skin or severe weakness



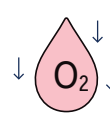
Rapid or irregular heart rate



Low blood pressure



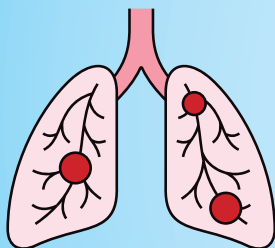
Rapid, shallow breathing



Low oxygen levels in the blood

In 2022, there were about 470,000 hospital discharges in the U.S. that included a diagnosis of pulmonary embolism.

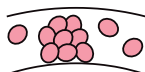
Get medical help right away if you think you might have symptoms of a PE.



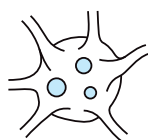
If you have a PE, a health care professional will assess your risk category based on how the clot is affecting your heart and lungs. This will help guide treatment and care decisions.

Who's at risk for a pulmonary embolism?

A PE can be caused by conditions including:



Conditions that increase the tendency for blood to clot (thrombophilia)



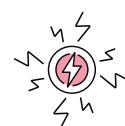
Active cancer



Some chronic conditions, including kidney disease, inflammatory bowel disease and autoimmune disease



Recent surgery, especially major or orthopedic surgery



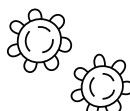
Major trauma



Prolonged lack of movement, such as bed rest or long periods of sitting or inactivity



Congestive heart failure or chronic lung disease



Serious infections, such as pneumonia, urinary tract infection or HIV



Obesity



Pregnancy

What are the complications of pulmonary embolism?

The effects of a PE can vary widely from person to person. Some people may have no noticeable symptoms. In other cases, a PE can cause serious complications, including:

- Right-sided heart failure
- Low blood pressure due to shock (cardiogenic or obstructive)
- Sudden cardiac arrest

If you think you have a PE, it is important to get medical help right away. For more information, visit heart.org/PEfacts.

An acute PE is a serious condition that can be fatal and causes about 100,000 deaths in the U.S. each year.

