

Children's Hospital of Illinois
HEMOPTYSIS
INFORMATION SHEET

WHAT IS HEMOPTYSIS?

Hemoptysis or the coughing up of blood is a complication of cystic fibrosis. It is very uncommon in young children but becomes more common during the teenage years. Hemoptysis is usually a sign of infection, however it can be due to a lack of vitamin K or severe liver disease.

Typically, what happens is that the infection irritates a blood vessel. This irritation makes a hole in the wall of the vessel that then allows blood to leak into the airway (breathing tube). This blood is then coughed up in your sputum (mucus). Sometimes you can even feel “gurgling” in the area that the blood is coming from.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF HEMOPTYSIS?

Hemoptysis can vary in amount from just some streaks of blood in your mucus to a large amount (>1 cup) of blood. The color can also vary from pink, to red to brown. It is very important to note these factors so that you can report them to your doctor or nurse.

HOW IS HEMOPTYSIS TREATED?

The intensity of treatment will depend on the amount and color of the blood as well as any other signs of infection you may be experiencing (i.e., weight loss, fatigue, increased cough). Treatment usually consists of antibiotics to treat the underlying infection. Depending on the amount of blood, you may need to be admitted to the hospital for intravenous (IV) antibiotics. It is also recommended that you hold your Pulmozyme[®] and your airway clearance therapy (i.e., CPT, Flutter[®], Acapella[®], Vest[®]) for at least forty-eight hours. If there is no further bleeding during that time, these therapies may be restarted.

Sometimes, extra vitamin K is also given since low levels of vitamin K can cause or worsen bleeding. Blood transfusions may be necessary if there has been a significant amount of blood loss but this is very rare.

Two procedures that may be required if there is massive (>1 cup) hemoptysis that can't be stopped are bronchial artery embolization and surgery. During an embolization procedure, a radiologist inserts a thin tube into the blood vessel that is bleeding and injects a substance that plugs the hole and stops the bleeding. This

type of procedure is usually very successful. However, in very rare circumstances when the bleeding cannot be controlled, surgery may be necessary. The surgery is used to remove the part of the lung that contains the bleeding vessel. Obviously, this is not the first choice of treatment and is only used in extreme situations.

Most of the time, hemoptysis can be treated with antibiotics, extra vitamin K and close monitoring. This is why it is important that you not panic and call your doctor or nurse if you notice blood in your mucus. Early treatment can help stop the bleeding.

When you call, it is useful if you can tell us how much blood there was and what color it was. This will help us determine whether to start treatment at home or have you come in to the emergency room for an evaluation and possible admission.

Important Numbers:

Nurse: _____

On-call Doctor: _____

Pediatric Emergency Department (if < 21 years old): _____

Adult Emergency Department (if > 21 years old): _____

