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HOSPICE PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

LUNG FAILURE

What is Lung Failure?

Lung failure, also known as respiratory failure, occurs when the lungs are unable to provide sufficient oxygen to meet the body's needs or effectively eliminate carbon dioxide. This condition can result from various lung diseases, infections, injuries, or systemic conditions affecting respiratory function.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Lung Failure?

Lung failure may manifest with a range of symptoms, and its severity can vary. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath (dyspnea)
- Rapid breathing
- Shallow breathing
- Cyanosis (bluish discoloration of the skin and lips)
- Confusion or altered mental status
- Extreme fatigue and weakness
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Persistent cough
- Wheezing or other abnormal sounds during breathing
- Increased heart rate

What potential factors can cause Lung Failure?

Lung failure can be caused by various factors, including:

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Pneumonia
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)
- Asthma
- Lung cancer
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Pulmonary embolism (blood clot in the lungs)
- Interstitial lung diseases
- Cystic fibrosis
- Trauma or injury to the chest
- Severe infections affecting the respiratory system

What can be done for the person with Lung Failure?

Managing lung failure involves supportive care, addressing the underlying causes, and, in severe

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cases, interventions such as mechanical ventilation. Here are some general strategies:

- Identification and treatment of the underlying respiratory condition causing lung failure.
- Supplemental oxygen therapy to improve oxygen levels in the blood.
- Use of mechanical ventilation (breathing machine) in cases of severe respiratory distress.
- Medication management to alleviate symptoms and address specific respiratory issues.
- Positioning strategies to optimize lung function and reduce breathing difficulties.
- Physical therapy to enhance lung capacity and improve respiratory muscle strength.
- Smoking cessation and avoidance of environmental pollutants contributing to lung damage.
- Regular monitoring of respiratory function through diagnostic tests and imaging studies.
- Palliative care for individuals with advanced lung failure who may not respond to curative interventions.

Open communication with healthcare providers, adherence to medical recommendations, and collaboration with pulmonologists and respiratory therapists are crucial for effective lung failure management. Additionally, connecting with respiratory disease organizations can offer valuable resources and support for individuals and their families facing the challenges of lung failure.