Nursing Flashcard – Pulmonary Embolism

**background**
1) condition that causes occlusion of a pulmonary artery by a blood clot
2) the clot originates from the venous system (usually within or proximal to the popliteal veins)

**etiology**
1) hypercoagulable states
2) major recent surgery (mainly orthopaedic, and abdominal)
3) woman on oral contraceptive / estrogen therapy
4) trauma / fractures to legs
5) congestive heart failure
6) myocardial infarction
7) immobility

**symptoms**
1) dyspnea
2) pleuritic chest pain
3) tachycardia
4) tachypnea
5) syncope

**diagnostic evaluation**
1) D-dimer (may rule out PE if normal)
2) lung scan, V/Q scan for the diagnosis of embolism
3) duplex ultrasound of the leg veins to detect a DVT
4) echocardiography (to detect vegetations on the tricuspid valve)

**complications**
1) pulmonary infarction
2) chronic pulmonary hypertension / chronic cor pulmonale / right heart failure
3) death

**treatment**
1) medical therapy
   i) thrombolytic therapy
   ii) anticoagulation (heparin / LMWH and than warfarin)
2) surgical therapy
   i) pulmonary thrombectomy
   ii) inferior vena cava filter insertion