Haemoptysis (Coughing up of Blood)

Haemoptysis is the coughing up of blood originating from the respiratory tract. This is a sign that can occur in someone who has lung cancer, and can be very distressing to patients and carers. Up to one third of patients with lung cancer develop haemoptysis.

Causes

It is important to establish that the blood or blood stained material has come from the chest and not the nose, upper respiratory tract, or gastro intestinal tract.

It is usually caused by the cancer invading a blood vessel in the lungs, causing it to bleed; other causes are infection, clot on the lung, or blood clotting disorders. Coughing up of blood can be transient or persistent and rarely causes a major problem.

Management

- Ensure your doctor is aware and assessed the cause and severity of the bleeding
- Sometimes a drug can be used to cause the blood to clot more quickly such as tranexamic acid
- Radiotherapy or laser therapy to the chest area can be very effective in sealing the bleeding blood vessel
- Very occasionally patients can have massive bleeding; in this case management should be regarded as an emergency, your doctor will then advise on the care required.

References
