

New Complication

Nixon's Trouble With a Lung

Long Beach

A portion of former President Nixon's right lung apparently collapsed last week, his doctor disclosed for the first time yesterday.

"We're running more definitive studies of a condition in the right lung which arose last week," Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's personal physician, said in a medical bulletin released at Memorial Hospital Medical Center here. "The right lung condition is called atelectasis."

Although the bulletin said only that atelectasis "could be described in lay language as an inactive area of lung tissue," it is more commonly defined as a lung collapse.

The bulletin did not disclose the extent of the atelectasis or amplify on it further.

Other physicians told the Los Angeles Times that an atelectasis or lung collapse is not necessarily a cause for concern.

However, they said it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between an atelectasis and a blood clot in the lung.

A pulmonary specialist told the Times that atelectasis generally is caused by one of three things — blood clots, recent surgery or an early sign of pneumonia.

Lungren earlier had disclosed that Mr. Nixon had a minor amount of fluid in his left lung.

The physician said the former President continued to receive intermittent positive pressure breathing treatments, apparently in an attempt to inflate the lung.

He also is being asked to cough and breath deeply.

The former President was described as "terribly weak physically."

Gradually increased activity was ordered for Mr. Nixon, which means he will be doing a little more walking in his room. He still suffers some pain from the blood mass in his left flank when he moves, his physician said.

Mr. Nixon, who was originally hospitalized for treatment of phlebitis in his left leg, underwent surgery a week ago so doctors could insert a small plastic clamp to prevent the potentially fatal movement of blood clots into his lung.

Following the surgery, Mr. Nixon suffered vascular shock, an acute failure of the circulation system and was listed in critical condition. He remained on the critical list until Sunday.

Los Angeles Times