

## When are the symptoms likely to occur?

Symptoms are likely to happen when there is an increase in demand for the blood circulating your body.

For example:-

- **Moving** -symptoms commonly occur when sitting or standing up suddenly.
- **In the morning** -blood pressure will tend to be lower.
- **After meals** -blood is needed by the digestive system. The demand is more after a big meal or sugary food. Having alcohol also has this effect.
- **Straining** -if you are constipated or have difficulty in passing urine.

**What to do if you get symptoms** -stop what you are doing and sit down. Drink some water. Think about what triggered your symptoms.

If you get frequent symptoms please contact your doctor for further advice. This may include lying and standing blood pressure monitoring or you may need your medication reviewing. Do not stop taking any medication without discussing it with your doctor first.

### Is there treatment available?

In many cases no treatment is required once the reason is identified and treated.

Getting into a routine of regular simple exercises can be beneficial.

In some cases the wearing of elastic stockings can be helpful, but they must be prescribed by your doctor as they could be contradicted in certain medical conditions.

In a few cases medication is required to prevent postural hypotension.

*For further information or advice or if you are worried about the risk of falling please speak to your doctor or health professional.*

## Postural Hypotension

### Patient Information Leaflet

**Postural Hypotension** (also known as orthostatic hypotension) is a fall in blood pressure that occurs when changing position from lying to sitting or sitting to standing.



**Postural** - change in position

**Hypotension** -drop in blood pressure to a low level

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## What are the symptoms of postural hypotension?

A fall in blood pressure leads to a reduced blood flow to your muscles, brain and other organs; this can cause a variety of symptoms.

- A feeling of dizziness and being light headed and sometimes falls.
- Change in your vision such as blurring, greying or blacking of vision.
- Feeling vague or muddled.
- Losing consciousness with or without warning -this is a 'blackout' or 'syncope' (simple faint).
- Weakness and fatigue.
- Pain can occur in a variety of places -neck, shoulder, lower back and buttocks, including angina type pain in chest.
- Feeling sick, hot and clammy.

*These symptoms can vary from person to person.*

## In addition the following can make symptoms worse :-

- **Medication** Some medication can affect your blood pressure. Ask your doctor or pharmacist.
- **Dehydration** If you have not drunk enough fluid, heavy sweating, loss of blood, severe diarrhoea and vomiting.
- **Getting over-heated** After a hot bath, being in a hot room or on a sunny day.
- **Anxiety and panic** This can cause you to change your normal breathing pattern.
- **Illness** Cold/infection

*Sometimes there is no particular obvious cause of this condition and it is more common in the elderly or in some patients with conditions such as Diabetes and Parkinson's disease.*

## There are many simple steps to manage or prevent postural hypotension. Here are some suggestions:-

**Go slow.** You may be able to reduce the dizziness and light headedness that occurs with postural hypotension by taking it easy when you move from lying to a standing position. When getting out of bed breathe deeply for a few minutes then slowly sit up before standing. Count to 10 before setting off.

**Have plenty of fluids.** Keeping hydrated helps prevent symptoms of low blood pressure. At least 6-8 glasses of fluid a day . Drink a large glass of water before getting out of bed in the morning.

**Exercise** your calf muscles before sitting up and getting out of bed. Sit on the edge of your bed for a minute before standing. You can flex your ankles up and down and do gentle marching movements to stimulate your circulation.

**Avoid bending at the waist or stretching up.** If you drop something on the floor, squat with your knees to recover it.

**Avoid standing for long periods of time.** Sit down to do tasks such as getting dressed, showering, or working in the kitchen.

**Avoid becoming constipated.** Ensure a diet high in fibre.