

Postural Hypotension

► What is postural hypotension?

Postural hypotension is a sudden drop in blood pressure that can happen when you stand up after sitting or lying down. The act of standing up reduces the blood supply to your brain and may cause symptoms such as dizziness, light-headedness, unsteadiness, blurred vision, weakness and sometimes blackouts. Postural hypotension increases your risk of falling and can adversely affect your quality of life. Sometimes it causes no symptoms, but may be detected when a health professional checks your lying and standing blood pressure. Postural hypotension can occur at any age, but is more common in older people.

► What causes postural hypotension?

- Not drinking enough fluids or being dehydrated
- Certain medications
- Prolonged bed rest
- Heart conditions
- Damage to the nervous system e.g. Parkinson's disease, diabetes
- Overheating or warm environments

► How is it diagnosed?

Postural hypotension is diagnosed by measuring your blood pressure whilst you are lying down and then again when you are standing.

► How can I reduce or manage my symptoms?

- Take care when getting up, particularly in the morning
- Avoid standing up quickly
- Avoid sitting or standing for long periods of time
- Avoid very hot baths and showers
- Avoid alcohol
- Eat little and often - avoid large meals
- Ensure you are drinking an adequate amount of fluid
- First thing in the morning, sit on the edge of your bed and drink a glass of water before you stand up.

If these measures do not completely help, please ask your doctor to review your medications in detail, to see if any of them need adjusting or discontinuing.

► What should I do if I feel the symptoms coming on?

- Stop what you are doing
- Sit down or lie down
- When the symptoms have settled, get up slowly