

**Patient
Information**

Orthostatic hypotension

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about orthostatic hypotension, advice about how to manage the symptoms and describes some of the treatments available.

What is orthostatic hypotension?

Orthostatic hypotension, sometimes known as postural hypotension, is a common problem affecting older people. It can also affect younger people who have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes.

Orthostatic hypotension happens when your blood pressure drops too low when standing up from sitting or lying.

Symptoms

Typical symptoms include:

- light-headedness
- dizziness
- darkening of vision
- falls
- blackouts

Why does it happen?

It may be due to:

- not drinking enough fluids
- certain medicines, such as those prescribed for high blood pressure, heart disease or depression
- a problem with the part of the nervous system which controls blood pressure (the Autonomic Nervous System)

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Department

**Care of the
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What can I do?

Do

- drink plenty of water
- eat small frequent meals
- get up slowly from your bed or chair
- cross your legs or squeeze your thighs together when standing
- increase the salt in your diet (but please check with your doctor first if you have high blood pressure)
- raise the head of the bed slightly
- sit or lie down if you feel lightheaded

Avoid

- standing up quickly
- standing for long periods of time
- drinking alcohol
- hot baths
- hot environments
- constipation

Treatments

Your doctor can:

- review your medication and if suitable reduce or stop certain medicines
- prescribe leg compression stockings or advise abdominal compression bands
- prescribe tablets to increase your blood pressure. This is only needed if symptoms are severe and should be carefully balanced against the risks and side effects of these medications.

Contact information

Care of the Elderly Department

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel 0300 422 5673

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:00pm

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85

<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>