

**Patient
Information**

Orthostatic hypotension

Introduction

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

What is orthostatic hypotension?

Orthostatic hypotension, sometimes known as postural hypotension, is a common problem affecting elderly people. It happens when blood pressure falls on 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 failure or depression
- a problem with the nerves which help to control blood pressure, such as in diabetes, also known as 'autonomic neuropathy'

What can I do?

Do

- drink plenty of water, juice or cordial
- increase the salt in your diet (this may not be appropriate if you already have high blood pressure – please check with your doctor)

Reference No.

GHPI0720_05_19

Department

Care of the
Elderly

Review due

May 2022

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- eat small frequent meals
- get up slowly from your bed or chair
- cross your legs when standing and squeeze together, or march on the spot
- sit or lie down if you feel lightheaded
- raise the head of the bed slightly

Do not

- take hot baths
- drink a lot of alcohol
- stand up quickly
- stand for long periods of time

Treatments

Your doctor can:

- review and if necessary limit the amount of blood pressure/heart failure medications you are given
- prescribe leg compression stockings, if appropriate
- prescribe tablets to increase your blood pressure and avoid salt loss (this medication can cause side-effects and may not be appropriate if you have high blood pressure, fluid retention or heart failure)

Contact information

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Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Content reviewed: May 2019