

**Patient
Information**

Orthostatic hypotension

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information 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 when standing up from a sitting or lying position.

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'.

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What can I do?

You should:

- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water or low-calorie drinks each day, unless you have been advised to limit your fluid intake.
- Eat small meals often.
- 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 your bed slightly.

What must I not do?

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 medication 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

The Falls Clinic

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

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