

# Postural Hypotension

Low blood pressure  
on sitting/standing up



## **What is it?**

Postural hypotension describes a drop in blood pressure sufficient to cause an inadequate blood supply to the brain.

## **What are the symptoms?**

You may feel dizzy and/or faint causing you to fall or blackout when:

- getting up quickly from lying or sitting positions,
- standing still for any length of time,
- getting out of a warm bath,
- standing up after a big meal.

**You will usually feel better if you lie or sit down.**

## **What causes it?**

It can occur at any age but is more common in older people or after surgery. Common causes include:-

- certain medicines (your doctor will advise you),
- prolonged bed rest,
- dehydration (a lack of water in the body),
- rare conditions of the nerves.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

Your doctor / nurse will measure your blood pressure at least once while you are lying down and again, after a minute or two, while you are standing up.

If your doctor/ nurse finds such falls in blood pressure, s/he may be able to give you advice, reduce your present medicines or start you on specific tablet treatment.

## **What should I do if I feel dizzy?**

- Sit down immediately.
- If possible lie down flat.
- Put your legs in the air, for example against a wall.

When you feel well again, get up cautiously. However if you have further symptoms you may need to lie down again.

## **How can I prevent symptoms occurring?**

- Take particular care in the morning. Blood pressure tends to be lowest in the morning and therefore symptoms are likely to be worst.
- Get out of bed in stages. Cross and uncross your legs firmly before sitting up and again before standing. Sit down again promptly if you have symptoms at any time.
- Avoid sudden changes in posture. Bending suddenly may make your symptoms worse. Try to pause in between changes in posture.
- Avoid sitting/standing for long periods. If you do have to stand still, then rock forward on the balls of your feet to encourage blood flow.
- Raise the head of your bed with blocks. Use bricks or heavy books to raise the head of the bed by about 6 inches (an occupational therapist can advise on this).
- Wear support stockings or tights. This helps return blood to the heart. Take them off before going to bed.

## **What can I eat and drink to help my symptoms?**

- Increase your fluid intake. You need to drink 3-4 pints (1.5 - 2 litres) of fluids per day, aiming to keep your urine clear all day.
- Your Doctor may give you specific advice about caffeine and salt intake. Please follow this advice.
- Take small, frequent meals. Some patients have large drops in blood pressure one or two hours after meals. Small meals help prevent this problem.
- Avoid excess alcohol. Alcohol will make your symptoms worse. You may find that you can tolerate a small drink but avoid taking large amounts in one go.

## **Are there any other treatments for postural hypotension?**

Ideally we try to avoid using medicines to help symptoms but in some cases this is necessary. Your doctor will always be able to discuss the pros and cons of any prescribed medicine.

**This document has been adapted from:  
Postural Hypotension - Royal United Hospital Bath**

## NOTES

## Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care.

However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patient, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

**If you have any questions, problems or concerns about your care or the care of the person you are looking after please contact the ward manager or PALS.**

**Email:** [stees.pals@nhs.net](mailto:stees.pals@nhs.net)  
**Freephone:** 0800 0282451  
**Telephone:** 01642 854807 / 01642 282657  
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Version 1, Issue Date: June 2018, Revision Date: June 2020