

Postural Hypotension

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Your guide to
Managing Postural Hypotension

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ABOUT POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

Q. WHAT IS IT?

- A.** Postural hypotension is a sudden drop in your blood pressure when you stand up after lying down or sitting.

Q. WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

A. It can occur:

- ◆ When your blood vessels do not tighten when you sit up or stand up
- ◆ As a side effect of your medication
- ◆ If you are dehydrated

Q. HOW COMMON IS IT?

- A.** Very common as we get older. One in four people over the age of 65 may have symptoms of postural hypotension.

Q. WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- A.**
- ◆ Feeling dizzy
 - ◆ Feeling light headed
 - ◆ Blurred vision
 - ◆ Weakness
 - ◆ Tremors or feeling unsteady
 - ◆ Fainting spells



MANAGING POSTURAL HYPOTENSION

Q. WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

A. There are a number of things you can try...

- ◆ Avoid fast changes in position. Get out of bed in three stages:
 - Sit up in bed for one minute
 - Sit on the side of the bed with legs dangling for one minute, taking slow, deep breaths and rotating your ankles, then
 - Stand with care for one minute before walking.
- ◆ Drink four to six glasses of water a day.
- ◆ Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate, “power” drinks) and alcohol, which can lead to dehydration.
- ◆ If you feel dizzy, sit down, put your head between your knees or lie down immediately. Wait until the feeling goes away before you **slowly** get up.
- ◆ Eat small meals rather than two or three large meals per day. Large meals take blood to the stomach for digestion. This limits the amount of blood that goes to the brain.
- ◆ **Stay active!** Walking is great exercise.
- ◆ Don’t hold your breath! Avoid straining on the toilet or when lifting or pushing.
- ◆ When sitting, cross your legs often or pump your calf muscles by pointing your toes up and down.
- ◆ Avoid heat (hot tubs, saunas or steam baths).
- ◆ Sleep with the head of your bed elevated on four or six inch blocks.
- ◆ Ask your doctor about wearing support stockings. Reducing swelling in the lower legs can be helpful.