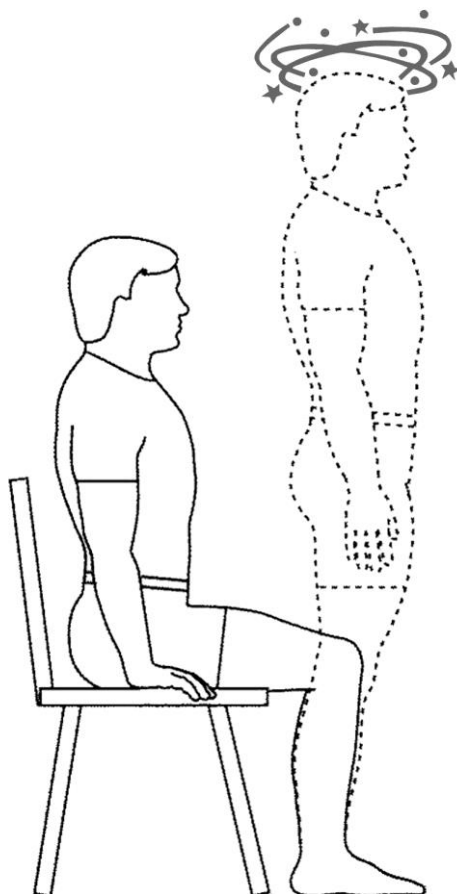


Patient Information Leaflet

# Postural Hypotension



## What is postural hypotension?

Postural hypotension is a drop in blood pressure when a person stands up from sitting or lying down. It is a common problem affecting older people but it can also affect younger people too. Please be reassured this is not a life threatening condition.

## What causes postural hypotension?

There are several causes for postural hypotension and it can be related to a combination of factors including:

- Not drinking enough fluids or being dehydrated
- Overheating - after a hot bath, being in a hot room or on a sunny day
- Standing up quickly from lying or sitting
- Straining - if you are constipated or are having difficulty passing urine
- After a large meal or alcohol
- Anxiety, panic or emotional distress
- Illness, such as a cold or infections
- Certain medications - water tablets (diuretics), blood pressure tablets (anti-hypertensives)
- Specific medical conditions e.g. Anaemia, Heart failure, Parkinson's disease, Diabetes and Adrenal disorders (such as Addison's Disease)
- Following prolonged bed rest

## What are the symptoms of postural hypotension?

This can vary from person to person. Some people may not have any symptoms. Common symptoms include:

- Feeling dizzy or light headed
- Feeling confused or muddled
- Headaches, feeling pressure or pain across the back of your shoulders and neck
- Weakness, fatigue and unsteadiness
- Blurry, greying, blacking or tunnel vision
- Losing consciousness with or without warning - this is a 'faint' or a 'blackout'

## What you can do to manage postural hypotension and the symptoms?

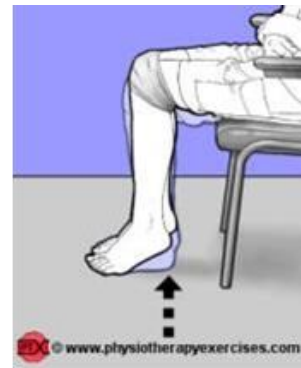
- Do not walk if you feel dizzy. Stop what you are doing and sit down or lie down for few minutes
- Get up slowly, especially when you are changing position, such as getting out of bed, standing up from the chair or bending forward. Make sure that your balance is steady before walking
- Drink 3 ½ pints (2litres) of fluid, preferably water, every day. Drink a large glass of water before getting out of bed in the morning unless you have been told to limit your fluid intake
- Take smaller and more frequent meals and avoid excessive alcohol
- Ensure that your diet is high in fibre to avoid becoming constipated
- Do plan your day ahead and sit down for tasks such as preparing meals/vegetables/getting dressed
- Avoid standing/sitting still for long periods of time
- Avoid very hot baths or showers
- Do try sleeping with your head raised 5 inches above the level of the mattress
- Do try clenching and unclenching your calf muscles before standing or moving
- Tell your doctor or practice nurse about any symptoms
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any new medication you are taking is likely to affect your blood pressure

**Do not stop taking any medication without discussing this first with a health care professional**

## What treatments are available?

- Your doctor can review your medications and suggest life style modifications
- Exercises before you stand to ease the symptoms

Lift your heels up and down



Tap your toes



Squeeze your fist and hold it for several seconds, then spread your fingers wide



- Your doctor might prescribe leg compression stockings or abdominal binder if appropriate



Wrap the abdominal Binder around your middle (like the picture) and secure with the Velcro so that it is tight but comfortable.

It is usually comfortable to wear over a thin vest or T-shirt.

It is best to put the abdominal binder on before getting out of bed (leave it close to hand at night). Wear during the day, it can be removed whenever lying down, and put back on before getting up again.

- Certain medications can be considered if your symptoms are not adequately controlled with non-drug measures

## Useful links:

NIHR Newcastle BRC: Orthostatic Hypotension animation: <https://youtu.be/fvMBBtcijl8>

## Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible. In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics. Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email [ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net](mailto:ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net).

**This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request**

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