

What is postural hypotension?

Postural (or orthostatic) **hypotension** is the medical term used to describe a **sudden drop in blood pressure** which occurs when a person **changes position**, from lying or sitting to standing.

Postural = Change in position

Hypotension = Low blood pressure

What are the symptoms of postural hypotension?

If a drop in blood pressure occurs when a person stands, this can cause a fall, faint or blackout. Some people have no symptoms or “warning signs”, but others do.

Symptoms might include:

- Feeling **dizzy** or lightheaded
- Feeling unsteady
- Feeling as if you are about to **faint**, fall, or pass out
- Feeling **weak** or fatigued.
- **Nausea**, or feeling hot and **clammy**
- **Headaches**
- **Blurry**, double, or tunnel **vision**
- Feeling **vague** or muddled
- **Pressure** or pain across the back of shoulders and **neck**
- **Chest discomfort** or pain

What causes postural hypotension?

It can be linked to **several factors**:

- **Dehydration** or not drinking enough fluids
- Side effects of **some medications**
- **Cardiac Conditions** such as heart failure (inability/inefficiency of the heart muscles), atherosclerosis (Collection of plaque causing hardening of the arteries).
- **Diabetes** (abnormal levels of glucose in the blood),
- **Neurological conditions**, for example Parkinson’s Disease (irregular dopamine production in the brain affecting the physical functions of the body)
- Some types of **Dementia** (progressive loss of cognitive function or ability, for example memory)
- **Anaemia** (having a reduced number of red blood cells)
- **Poor circulation** or poor functioning veins in the legs
- **Alcoholism** (excess alcohol consumption)
- **Emotional distress**, or if a person becomes anxious or panics

Other **factors** can **make symptoms worse**:

- **Standing** or sitting up **too quickly**
- Blood pressure can be lower in the **morning**
- After **large meals**
- Straining due to **constipation**
- Becoming **overheated**
- **Overexertion**- excessive activity or exercise
- Prolonged **bed rest**
- Acute **illnesses** such as colds or infections

How can I manage my symptoms?

DO:

- ✓ **Exercise** gently **before standing** or walking (see next page)
- ✓ **Get out of bed slowly** - Sit up and wait before standing, and make sure the symptoms have eased before walking
- ✓ **Sit down** if you **feel any symptoms** (e.g. dizziness)
- ✓ Sleep with your **head** or upper body **elevated** slightly- you can use pillows to prop yourself up higher
- ✓ Eat **smaller regular meals**
- ✓ Keep **hydrated** by drinking fluids regularly
- ✓ **Discuss your symptoms** with your GP or the health care professional
- ✓ Ask for a **medication review** with your GP or Pharmacist
- ✓ Always **take your medication** as directed
- ✓ Use **compression stockings** if advised

AVOID:

- ✗ Becoming **dehydrated**
- ✗ Getting up quickly, or **hurrying** e.g. to answer the phone or door
- ✗ Standing or **sitting still for long periods** of time
- ✗ **Large meals**
- ✗ Excessive **alcohol**
- ✗ Becoming **overheated**- avoid very hot baths or being in a very warm room
- ✗ Becoming **constipated**

Exercises

These are some simple exercises that can help stimulate your circulation and reduce symptoms

- You can do them in bed, or whilst sitting or standing
- You should do them before you change position, especially if you have been sitting or lying down for a while
- The time you need to spend doing these exercises varies from person to person, but you should aim to do these for a few minutes



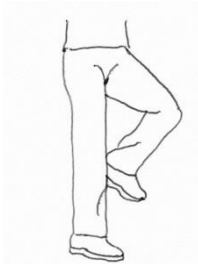
Clench and unclench your fists

Move your feet up and down at the ankle



Rotate each ankle round and round

March your feet up and down on the spot



Postural Hypotension

Patient information leaflet

