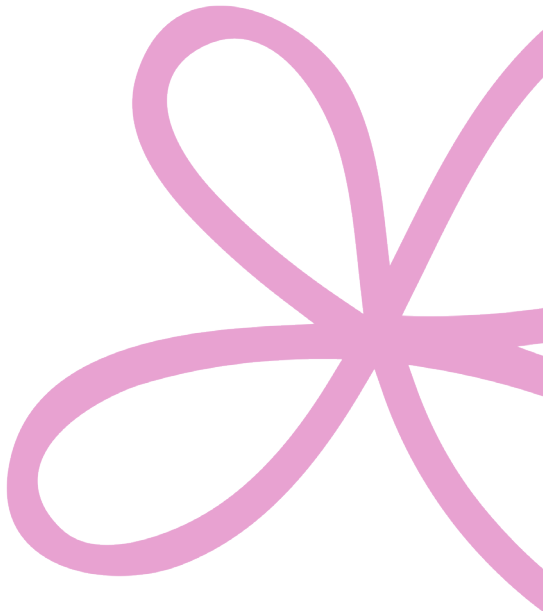


POSTURAL HYPOTENSION



What is postural hypotension?

Postural hypotension is a drop in the blood pressure that occurs when changing position from lying to sitting or sitting or bending or crouching to standing.

Why might you develop it?

Several things can cause postural hypotension including:

- being on several medications
- having generally low blood pressure
- having adrenal problems

What are the symptoms?

A reduced blood supply to your muscles and some organs can cause a variety of symptoms which could include:

- feeling dizzy or light-headed
- blurring of vision
- feeling vague or muddled
- weakness or fatigue
- losing consciousness with or without warning – a ‘blackout’ or ‘faint’
- pain in the shoulders, back or chest
- some people may even fall

When are these things likely to happen?

- in the morning – blood pressure naturally lower
- moving – especially sitting or standing up suddenly, or standing or exercising on your feet for a long while
- after alcohol or meals – especially large ones, as blood diverts to the digestive system

- straining – on the toilet when you are constipated or have difficulty passing water.

Other things that can make it worse include:

- being dehydrated
- getting overheated – a hot room, bath or day
- anxiety and panic, especially if it changes your breathing pattern
- some illnesses, especially if you then spend a lot of time in bed
- some medications

How can you prevent or manage postural hypotension?

- try to avoid becoming constipated or dehydrated – speak to your doctor or nurse if you think that this is a problem
- avoid getting up quickly or rushing
- plan ahead
- take your time
- before moving, work your calf muscles by pumping your feet to support the circulation
- do it in stages with pauses in between eg. lying to sitting then pause then stand up then pause and get your balance before walking
- avoid standing still for long periods of time
- avoid extremes of postural change such as bending to a laundry basket on the floor then up to a washing line above your head

- sit down for everyday tasks that involve bending and balance such as washing and dressing
- keep active
- wear any support or compression socks that you are given
- ask if your blood pressure will be affected by any new tablets.

If you feel the symptoms coming on:

- stop what you are doing
- sit down
- sip some water
- think about what might have triggered the symptoms

And when you are ready:

- try again slowly

IMPORTANT

If this becomes more of a problem and if you are blacking out or falling over; speak to your doctor, nurse or physiotherapist.

Birmingham St Mary's Hospice

176 Raddlebarn Road Selly Park,
Birmingham, B29 7DA

Tel: 0121 752 8798 / 8799

Fax: 0121 472 4159

Email: info@birminghamhospice.org.uk

www.birminghamhospice.org.uk

St Mary's Hospice Ltd registered in England
No. 1161308. Registered Charity No. 503456