

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

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Postural Hypotension

A patient's guide



What is postural hypotension?

- Postural hypotension is a fall in blood pressure which occurs when sitting or standing up, which can result in certain symptoms due to reduced blood supply to the brain and muscles.
- Symptoms resulting from reduced blood supply to the brain include:
 - Dizziness
 - Changes in vision
 - Blackouts
- Symptoms resulting from reduced blood supply to muscles include:
 - Pain across back, shoulders and buttocks
 - Chest pain
 - Weakness
 - Fatigue

When does it happen?

- In the morning – when blood pressure is naturally lower
- Suddenly changing position from lying down to sitting or standing

- When sitting, pull your toes up and straighten your knee; Then relax
- When sitting, lift your arms up, thumbs first, and repeat 5 time

Emergency Measures

- Make your family or carer aware if you have postural hypotension.
- Should you start to feel symptoms, you should:
 - STOP what you are doing
 - SIT down or lie down
 - DRINK water
- Should you blackout, your family or carer should:
 - Lie you flat
 - Do first aid checks (check breathing, check for pulse)
 - Raise your legs above your hips and hold them for 3-5 minutes
 - If there is no response after this, then phone an ambulance
- Consider a 'Medic-alert' bracelet. Please speak to your local pharmacist about this.
- Please contact your GP for further information

New tablets

- Read the information leaflets for your medications
- Ask your GP or pharmacist if any of your medications may be contributing and need altering (e.g. Parkinson's medications, blood pressure medications, opioid painkillers, benzodiazepines, antidepressants, antipsychotics)
- Medications can sometimes be used to raise blood pressure (e.g. fludrocortisone or midodrine). Please speak to a doctor if you have queries regarding medication

Exercises to do when in bed or changing position before you get up

- When lying down, bend and straighten your leg 5 times
- When lying down or sitting, bend or straighten your ankles 10 times
- When sitting, cross and uncross your legs 5 times on each leg

- On any exertion (as blood goes to the muscles rather than the brain)
- After long periods of inactivity (as blood can pool in the legs)
- After meals (as blood is needed by the digestive system)
- Due to medications (especially those that lower blood pressure)
- Symptoms can be worsened by dehydration, overheating, illness, anxiety and medications

Improving control of your postural hypotension

Avoid dehydration

- Drink plenty of fluids (2 litres each day – unless you have been advised otherwise by your doctor). This includes water, tea, juice
- Drink a large glass of water before getting out of bed
- Avoid alcohol

Take it easy in the morning

- Do exercises before getting up
- Get out of bed slowly and in stages (sit on the side of bed before standing)

Move safely

- Take your time when changing position (e.g. rising from a chair)
- Sit down to do everyday tasks e.g. dressing or chopping vegetables
- Avoid bending down or stretching up
- Get up from the toilet slowly
- Avoid prolonged standing – if you need to stand for long periods cross your legs and fold your arms
- Wear full length elasticated stockings or tights (unless you have reduced circulation or sensation in your feet)

Mealtimes

- Eat small, regular meals
- Avoid heavy meals, sugary foods and drinks
- Use drinks containing caffeine e.g. coffee (but not at night as you will need to get up more to pass urine overnight)

Sleeping

- Avoid lying flat – use pillows or raise the head of your bed
- Don't drink caffeinated drinks at night

Preventing constipation

- Eat foods with fibre (e.g. cereals and fruit) every day
- Drink 2L fluid everyday (unless told otherwise)
- Avoid straining on the toilet
- Ask a pharmacist or GP about laxatives