

Orthostatic Hypotension (Postural Hypotension)

Definition - Orthostatic Hypotension is a form of low blood pressure that happens when you stand up from sitting or lying down. Orthostatic hypotension can make you feel dizzy or lightheaded, and maybe even faint.

Things you can do to help control the symptoms:

- **Get plenty of fluids.** Keeping hydrated helps prevent symptoms of low blood pressure. Take not only water but fluid with electrolytes (like Gatorade, PowerAde etc.)
- **Avoid alcohol** (any type) If you drink limit yourself to no more than one drink a day because alcohol can worsen orthostatic hypotension.
- **Exercise and stretch.** Exercise your legs specifically your calf muscles before sitting up. Also, when getting out of bed, sit on the edge of your bed for a minute before standing.
- **Avoid bending at the waist.** If you drop something on the floor, squat with your knees to recover it.
- **Wear compression stockings.** These may help reduce the pooling of blood in your legs, thus, reducing the symptoms of orthostatic hypotension.
- **Go slow.** You may be able to reduce the dizziness and lightheadedness that occur with orthostatic hypotension by taking it easy when you move from a lying down to a standing position. Instead of jumping out of bed in the morning, breathe deeply for a few minutes and then slowly sit up before standing.
- **Leg movements.** If you begin to get symptoms while standing, cross your thighs in a scissors fashion and squeeze or put one foot on a ledge or chair and lean as far forward as possible. These maneuvers encourage blood to flow from your legs to your heart.
- **Sleep position.** Sleeping with the head of your bed slightly elevated can help fight the effects of gravity.
- **More salt in your diet.** This must be done with care, and only after discussing it with your doctor. Too much salt can cause your blood pressure to increase beyond a healthy level, creating new health risks. Some salty snacks like nuts and pretzels can help.
- **Blood pressure medicines.** Discuss with your medical doctors the possible need to decrease or change the blood pressure medicines. (Sometimes using a short acting BP medicine at PM can cover for the supine and early morning BP elevation.)

Adapted from Mayo Clinic