

Orthostatic Hypotension

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FACT SHEET



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Special Interest Group



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What is orthostatic hypotension?

Orthostatic hypotension, also referred to as postural hypotension, signifies a drop in blood pressure when you stand up from sitting or lying down. Orthostatic hypotension can make you feel dizzy, cause blurring of vision, make you unsteady or even result in fainting.

This condition is more common in older people but is seen in all age groups. Occasional dizziness or lightheadedness may not require medical follow up. For example, this could be the result of not drinking enough fluids, low blood sugar, or too much time in the sun or hot tub. While symptoms may only last a few seconds to a few minutes after standing it is important to talk to your doctor if your symptoms are long-lasting or if they are happening very frequently. If you pass

What causes orthostatic hypotension?

When you change positions it causes a temporary decrease in blood flow and not enough oxygen to your brain. Usually your heart rate increases when you change positions so your body gets enough blood flow to prevent symptoms of orthostatic hypotension. Orthostatic hypotension occurs when something interrupts your body's natural process of counteracting low blood pressure.

Am I at risk?

- **Age:** Most orthostatic hypotension occurs in those age 65 and older
- **Medications:** Some medications, most notably high blood pressure medication, have a greater risk of causing orthostatic hypotension. Some over the counter medication many cause low blood pressure when taken in combination with other prescribed drugs. Notify your doctor of all over the counter medications that you take.
- **Certain diseases:** Parkinson's disease and some heart conditions may put you at greater risk for developing orthostatic hypotension
- **Heat Exposure:** Being in a hot environment can cause you to sweat and possibly cause dehydration, which can lower your blood pressure and trigger orthostatic hypotension
- **Bed rest:** If you have to stay in bed for a long time due to an illness you may become weak. When first getting out of bed you may experience orthostatic hypotension.

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What can I do?

You can be tested for orthostatic hypotension by a variety of medical providers including physical therapists. You can take precautions to prevent falls due to orthostatic hypotension by taking time between position changes to allow your blood pressure to stabilize, performing simple exercises prior to standing, or you may even be encouraged to wear compressive socks or a stomach binder. Persistent or problematic orthostatic hypotension needs to be addressed by a medical provider who is knowledgeable about orthostatic hypotension.

References:

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