Orthostatic Hypotension

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Fact Sheet

What is orthostatic hypotension?

Orthostatic hypotension, also called as postural hypotension, is a large drop in blood pressure when you stand up from sitting or lying down. Orthostatic hypotension can make you feel dizzy, unsteady or even cause you to faint.

This condition is more common in older people but is seen in all age groups. Occasional dizziness or lightheadedness may not require you to see a physician. It may be caused by not drinking enough water, low blood sugar, or too much time in the sun or hot tub. Symptoms may last only a few seconds to minutes after standing. It is important to talk to your doctor if your symptoms are happening regularly because you could be at risk for falls.

What causes orthostatic hypotension?

When you stand up quickly, there is a decrease in blood flow, causing less oxygen to your brain. Your heart rate should increase when you stand up so your body gets enough blood flow to prevent lightheadedness. When your body does not react fast enough, this condition can occur.

Am I at risk?

- Age: Most orthostatic hypotension occurs in adults age 65 and older.
- Medications: Some medications, especially high blood pressure medication, may cause orthostatic hypotension. Some non-prescription medications may cause low blood pressure when taken with prescribed drugs. Tell your doctor of all medications that you take.
- Certain diseases: Parkinson's disease and some heart conditions may put you at more risk of having 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 cause orthostatic hypotension if you stand up quickly.
- 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.