

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

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## Postural hypotension

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### What is postural hypotension?

Postural hypotension is a fall in blood pressure that occurs when changing position from lying to sitting or from sitting to standing.

Postural means a change in position. Hypotension means a fall in blood pressure to a low level.

### What are the symptoms of postural hypotension?

A fall in blood pressure leads to a reduced blood supply to organs and muscles. This can cause a variety of symptoms:

- Feeling dizzy and light-headed.
- Changes in vision such as blurring, greying or blacking vision.
- Feeling vague or muddled.
- Losing consciousness with or without warning – this is a 'blackout' or 'faint.'
- Pain across the back of the shoulders and neck.
- Chest pain.
- Weakness and fatigue.
- Pain in lower back and buttocks.

These symptoms can vary from person to person.

### New medicines

Ask if your blood pressure may be affected by any new medicines. Read the information leaflets that come with your medicine.

Some people may find spreading their medicines for high blood pressure over the day may help. Speak to your pharmacist or doctor about any concerns.

### When are the symptoms likely to happen?

When there is an increased demand on the circulating blood. For example:

- Moving – standing or sitting up suddenly.
- In the morning – blood pressure is naturally lower.
- After meals – as blood is needed by the digestive system. In particular, big meals or sugary foods increase this demand. Alcohol also has this effect.
- During exercise – such as walking and activities such as dusting - especially when on your feet. This increases the demand for blood in the muscles.
- Straining on the toilet when you are constipated or have difficulty passing urine.

### Preventing constipation:

- Eat foods with fibre, for example cereals and fruit.
- Eat five fruit/vegetables every day.
- Drink 3½ pints (2 litres) of fluid every day.

**In addition, the following things will make symptoms worse:**

- Being dehydrated by not drinking enough fluids.
- Getting overheated; in a warm room, after a hot bath or on a sunny day.
- Illnesses such as colds or infections, especially if you need to rest in bed.
- Anxiety and panic, especially if it changes your breathing pattern.
- Some medicines such as water tablets can worsen postural hypotension.

**How can you help yourself?**

Plan ahead – sleep on a good pillow with your head five inches above your horizontal body. When you get up, take your time. Get up slowly and sit for a while moving your feet up and down. Then stand up slowly and move off.

Avoid getting up quickly and hurrying. Sit down to do everyday tasks like getting dressed or preparing vegetables.

Avoid bending down or stretching up (for example hanging out washing) and avoid standing still for long periods of time.

**What to do when you get symptoms**

Think of the symptoms as a warning that your blood pressure is too low. The only way to improve your blood pressure is to:

- **STOP** what you're doing.
- **SIT** down.
- **DRINK** some water.
- **THINK** about what triggered your symptoms.

Please ask your doctor if you have any further questions.

**Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

**Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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