

Orthostatic Hypotension

What is orthostatic hypotension?

Orthostatic hypotension (also called postural hypotension) is when your blood pressure drops when you change positions. This can happen when you go from lying down to sitting up, or from sitting to standing. When your blood pressure drops, your organs and muscles don't get enough blood. When this happens, you may have a higher chance of falling.

What causes orthostatic hypotension?

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes (high blood sugar), heart failure or atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Taking diuretics (water pills), antidepressants, or medicines to lower blood pressure
- Parkinson's disease and some types of dementia
- Not getting enough Vitamin B12
- Anemia (a health problem where you don't have enough healthy red blood cells to carry enough oxygen to different parts of your body)
- Dehydration (when your body doesn't have enough water)
- Alcoholism
- Being on bedrest for a long time



What are the symptoms?

Many people with orthostatic hypotension have no symptoms while others do. These symptoms can vary from person to person. Some symptoms are:

- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Feeling like you might faint, pass out, or fall
- Headaches
- Blurry eyesight
- Feeling pressure across the back of your shoulders or neck
- Feeling weak or very tired
- Feeling nauseous, or hot and clammy

You may have symptoms:

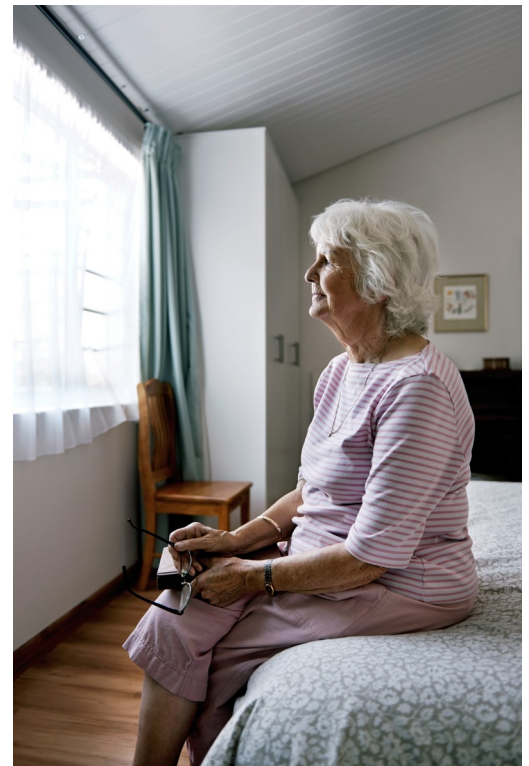
- When you sit or stand up suddenly
- In the morning. This is because your blood pressure is lower
- After you eat a large meal
- After you drink alcohol
- When you exercise
- When you are straining on the toilet
- When you are sick
- If you become anxious or worried

What Can I Do to Help Control My Orthostatic Hypotension?

- Talk with your doctor about any symptoms you have.
- Ask your doctor about your medicines. Ask if you should take a lower dose (amount) or stop taking certain medicines.
- Take your time when getting out of bed. First sit up. Then sit on the side of the bed. Then stand up.



- Go slow when you are changing positions, such as getting out of a chair.
- Slowly exercise before getting up. You can move your feet up and down and clench and unclench your hands. After you stand up, march in place.
- Have something you can hold on to when standing up.
- Do not walk if you feel dizzy or lightheaded.
- Sleep with extra pillows to raise your head.
- Drink 6-8 glasses of water each day (unless your doctor told you that you should limit the amount of fluids you have).
- Try to stay away from taking very hot baths or showers.



Talk to your doctor if you have more questions!