

Guide to understanding Postural Hypotension

Reference Number: ULHT-LFT-3373 v1

Issued: May 2024

Review Date: May 2026



What is postural hypotension?

It is a fall in blood pressure which often occurs when a person changes their body position (posture), typically from lying to standing or sometimes sitting.

What causes postural hypotension?

There are several causes of postural hypotension. It is more common in older people, especially in people with conditions such as diabetes and Parkinson's disease, however, it can occur in almost anyone.

It can be caused by:

- Not drinking enough fluids or being dehydrated
- Overheating - after a hot bath, being in a hot room on a sunny day
- Illness like colds or infections
- Anxiety or panic - causes changes to normal breathing pattern
- Anaemia
- Mobilising after a period of prolonged bed rest
- Certain medications e.g. taking too many 'water tablets' (diuretics), having too much medication for high blood pressure (anti-hypertensive) or medication for specific diseases/conditions such as Parkinson's disease

What are the symptoms of postural hypotension?

A fall in blood pressure leads to a reduced blood supply to the brain, other organs and muscles which can cause a variety of symptoms including:

- Feeling dizzy or light headed, particularly on standing up
- Feeling confused or muddled
- Losing consciousness with or without warning
- Change in vision such as blurring, greying or blackening vision
- Weakness and fatigue
- Pain across the back of your shoulders and neck
- Pain across your lower back and buttocks

Symptoms can vary from person to person.

When are symptoms likely to happen?

When there is an increased demand for the blood circulating, for example:

- Moving – standing or sitting up suddenly
- In the morning – blood pressure is naturally lower first thing in the morning
- During exercise – exercise and activity of any kind (including housework) increases the demand for blood for the muscles
- After meals – blood is needed by the digestive system, particularly after large meals or sugary food or alcohol
- Straining – if you are constipated or having difficulty passing urine

What should you do if you get symptoms?

Think of the symptoms as a warning that your blood pressure is too low. To improve symptoms and remain safe:

STOP what you are doing

SIT/LIE down

DRINK a glass of water

THINK what could have triggered your symptoms

If you have frequent symptoms, contact your GP for advice. This may include further investigations of your symptoms including medication review and lying and standing blood pressure monitoring.

What treatments are available?

Your doctor can:

- Treat any underlying medical cause
- Review medications taken to see if causing postural hypotension
- Review and amend amount of blood pressure/heart medications
- Prescribe leg compression stockings
- Prescribe tablets to increase blood pressure and avoid salt loss, if appropriate

Do not stop taking any medications without discussing this first with your doctor.

For further information or support please contact the ward/department this patient information was obtained.

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust has worked with AccessAble to create detailed Access Guides to facilities, wards and departments at our sites.

www.accessable.co.uk/united-lincolnshire-hospitals-nhs-trust

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk