



Postural (Orthostatic) Hypotension

(information for health professionals)

What is Postural Hypotension?

Postural (Orthostatic) Hypotension is when the blood pressure drops when there is a change of position such as lying to sitting or sitting to standing.

Orthostatic hypotension is defined by:

- a. A drop in systolic BP of 20mmHg or more (with or without symptoms)
- b. A drop to below 90mmHg on standing even if the drop is less than 20mmHg (with or without symptoms)
- c. A drop in diastolic BP of 10mmHg with symptoms (although clinically much less significant than a drop in systolic BP).

Report deficits to medical officer and follow their recommendations

Symptoms include:	When do symptoms occur?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls, gait imbalance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When standing or sitting up suddenly
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dizzy/light headed, especially when moving from lying or sitting to standing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the morning when blood pressure is naturally lower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling or fainting, weakness, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a large meal or alcohol
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimming/disturbance of vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweating and/or nausea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When straining on the toilet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild momentary confusion 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained syncope 	

Potential Causes/Contributing Factors: these are multiple but include

- Hypertension
- Various medical conditions e.g. diabetes,
- Cardiac conditions including postural tachycardia syndrome
- Medications, e.g. diuretics, antidepressants, antihypertensives
- Neurological conditions e.g. Parkinson’s disease and some types of dementia
- Dehydration
- Anaemia
- Frailty,
- Prolonged bed rest or inactivity



Taking a Lying and Standing Blood Pressure

A lying and standing blood pressure should be taken if the patient has a medical condition or takes medications that may potentially contribute to OH, complains of/exhibits any of the above symptoms and/or has been identified during a falls risk screening.

The patients' falls risk screen, risk identification and interventions required must be reviewed and updated.

Procedure:

1. Identify if you are going to need assistance to stand the patient and simultaneously measure the blood pressure (BP).

2. It is preferable to use a manual sphygmomanometer.

3. Explain procedure to the patient.



After at least
five minutes



4. The first BP should be taken after the patient has been lying down for at least five minutes.

In the first
minute



5. The second BP should be taken within the first minute of the patient standing.

6. Document the result.

Non – Pharmacological Treatment:

- Review and update the FRAMP (complete risk assessment and interventions)
- Patients should first sit when going from a supine to a standing position
- Isometric exercises prior to going from supine to standing (lift alternate legs up and down, then move feet up and down)
- Eating frequent, small meals (post prandial hypotension can occur)
- Physical counter-maneuvres when upright, such as marching on the spot, leg-crossing, standing on tiptoes, and muscle tensing, increases venous return to the heart and enhances orthostatic tolerance
- Full-length elastic stockings, consider abdominal binders (on surgical wards)
- Salt intake may need increasing (on medical advice only)
- 2 litres of water a day (on Medical advice and not for patients on fluid restrictions)
- Tilting the head of the bed up during the night – approx. 10 - 20°
- Avoiding situations that trigger symptoms, such as standing for long periods
- Review of medications
- Life style modification- minimal alcohol

More information from: SCGH: [Falls Management Website](#) ♦ Stay On Your Feet®: <https://www.stayonyourfeet.com.au>

♦ Healthy WA: <https://healthywa.wa.gov.au> ♦ Better Health Channel: <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>