



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Orthostatic Hypotension

(without salt)

Issued by the Falls and Syncope Service





**This leaflet is to help you manage the symptoms of your condition.**

## **What is Orthostatic Hypotension?**

Orthostatic hypotension, also known as postural hypotension is a medical condition where your blood pressure drops when you stand up. If your blood pressure drops significantly it can reduce the blood supply to your brain and you might feel dizzy, lightheaded, have visual problems or suffer blackouts and falls. Please read this leaflet carefully.

## **What should I do if I feel symptoms coming on?**

- Sit down immediately - the lower the chair the faster the symptoms will resolve
- Lie down flat if you can
- If possible raise your legs in the air, for example rest them up against a wall
- Raising both arms above your head may also be helpful
- Once you are feeling well again get up slowly, but be prepared to sit down again should symptoms return.

# What can I do to help prevent symptoms?

## You should avoid:

- taking hot baths, as this may provoke your symptoms
- standing for long periods of time, such as in a bus queue or in a shop, especially in a warm environment, always ask for a seat. If you must stand for a time, then clench or unclench your calf muscles or gently rock forwards and backwards on the balls of your feet. Alternatively, clench and unclench your fists
- excessive alcohol, as this can make your symptoms worse
- large meals - if you experience symptoms after eating a large meal, try eating smaller meals more often.

## Other precautions you can take include:

- you may notice that your symptoms are worse in the morning. Take extra care when you first get up
- take special care getting out of bed. Perform leg exercises before sitting and then again before standing
- crossing and uncrossing your legs 3 or 4 times is often helpful. Have a glass of water (approx 250mls) before getting out of bed in the morning
- drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids during the morning such as water or juice. Keep drinking enough throughout the day to keep your urine a pale yellow colour. Try to drink at least two litres of fluid a day, you can include tea and coffee in this

- strong, caffeinated tea or coffee may be helpful, but do not drink more than five cups per day
- if you bend or stoop, take your time standing up. Have a chair close by to sit on before standing back up again
- a small collapsible stool may be useful in the garden or elsewhere outside in case your symptoms come on suddenly
- wear thigh-length support stockings during the day, but always remove them before bed. The addition of an abdominal binder may be helpful in some cases. These will be prescribed for you by the hospital or GP if they are required
- effective 'head up tilt sleeping' can be achieved by elevating the head of the bed about 20 – 25cm. To avoid sliding down while sleeping, a hard pillow under the mattress at the level of the buttocks can be used if you don't have a footboard
- a program of exercises and activity can improve symptoms with time. Try to keep as fit as you can for example by walking, swimming or a similar exercise
- be careful in warm weather, avoid overheating.

## Useful contact numbers

**If you need any further information please contact the Tilt Room at:**

Wansbeck General Hospital  
Woodhorn Lane  
Ashington  
Northumberland  
Direct Line: (01670) 529176

Jubilee Day Hospital  
North Tyneside General Hospital  
Rake Lane  
North Shields  
Tyne & Wear  
Direct Line: (0191) 293 4271

You can contact the Tilt Room:

Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

**We cannot always answer the telephone when the clinic is on. Please leave a message and we will contact you as soon as we can.**



## Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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