

## What to do if you fall

**Stop, think, plan and attract help.** Use your care alarm pendant (this only works if worn) or crawl to a telephone or bang on the floor or shout. Try to get up if you can.

**Keep warm.** Cover yourself with anything to hand, for example a towel, rug, or blanket.

**Keep moving.** Move the parts of your body that don't hurt to stop pressure on the bony parts.

## Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone 0800 328 7971.

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at:  
[EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

**Arabic** يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتسبيق مختلف.

**Bengali** আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**Urdu** اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

**Chinese** 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

**Polish** Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

**Portuguese** Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutra idioma ou num formato diferente.

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Falls prevention

## Orthostatic hypotension

A guide to understanding and managing orthostatic hypotension

## Orthostatic hypotension

Orthostatic hypotension (also known as postural hypotension) is a fall in blood pressure that occurs when changing position from lying to sitting or sitting to standing.

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

### Symptoms

- feeling dizzy and light headed
- feeling nauseous, hot and clammy
- blurring, greying, blacking or tunneling of vision
- feeling vague or muddled
- losing consciousness
- syncope (simple faint)
- pressure across the back of the shoulders or neck
- weakness
- fatigue

These symptoms can vary from person to person.

Orthostatic hypotension may be caused by or associated with certain conditions such as:

- heart failure
- dehydration
- prolonged bed rest
- diabetes
- certain neurological disorders (i.e. Parkinson's disease and some types of dementia)
- autonomic neuropathy
- vitamin B12 deficiency, diabetes, alcoholism

- anaemia
- atherosclerosis

Symptoms are more likely to happen when there is an increased demand on the circulating blood, such as:

- standing or sitting suddenly
- in the morning, when blood pressure is naturally lower
- after large meals or alcohol
- during exercise
- straining on the toilet
- illness (i.e. a cold or infection)
- anxiety and panic

Certain medications may also worsen or cause orthostatic hypotension.

### Managing your orthostatic hypotension

- Try sleeping with your head up (use extra pillows).
- Get out of bed slowly and in stages. First sit on the side of the bed before standing. Count to ten before setting off.
- Take your time when changing position i.e. when rising from a chair.
- Make sure you have your walking aid at hand or something to hold on to when standing.
- Try to avoid bending down or stretching up.
- Drink 2 litres (3½ pints) of fluid per day (water, tea, coffee, low-sugar drinks).

- Exercise gently before getting up (moving your feet up and down) or after standing (marching on the spot) to stimulate your circulation.
- If possible sit when washing, showering, dressing or when working in the kitchen.
- Have your lying and standing blood pressure checked by your GP or a specialist. Ideally you should be laid down and rested for at least three minutes before it is taken.
- Your current medication may contribute to your symptoms. They may need to be reviewed or altered by a specialist or your GP.

**Do not stop taking your current medication unless authorised to do so by your GP or a doctor.**

For further information or advice, or if you are worried about the risk of falling and would like an assessment by a falls specialist, please contact the falls office by:

Phone: 01865 903400

Email: [falls@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:falls@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)