Postural Hypotension
(Low blood pressure from lying, sitting to standing up)

Some Practical advice

What is it?
Postural hypotension describes a drop in blood pressure sufficient to cause an inadequate blood supply to the brain.

How is it diagnosed?
It is diagnosed by a significant drop in blood pressure of 20mmHg systolic from lying to standing and/or 10mmHg diastolic.
The blood pressure is measured at intervals.
3-5 minutes quiet lying
1 minute after standing
3 minutes after standing
If the blood pressure continues to fall, and the patient is having symptoms of dizziness. Continue to measure at:
4 minutes standing
5 minutes standing. (Sometimes this can be very difficult for individual patients)
Ask the patient throughout the procedure if he/she experiences any dizziness or any symptoms.

What are the causes of Postural Hypotension?
It can occur at any age but is more common in older people. Common causes include:
- Certain medicines (diuretics, anti-hypertensive’s)
- Prolonged bed rest
- Dehydration
- Rare condition of the nerves

What are the symptoms?
Patients may feel dizzy or faint causing them to fall or blackout when:
• Getting up quickly from a lying or sitting position.
• Standing still for any length of time.
• Getting out of a warm bath.
• Standing up after a big meal.

What should patients do if they fell dizzy on standing?
• Sit down immediately.
• If possible lie down flat.
• Put legs against a wall (above head height for a few minutes)
• When you fell well again, get up cautiously, However if you have further symptoms you may need to lie down again.
• Please contact your GP immediately if you continue to have symptoms.

How do patients prevent symptoms occurring?
• Take particular care in the morning. Blood pressure tends to be lowest in the morning and therefore symptoms are likely to be worst.
• Get out of bed in stages. Cross and uncross your legs firmly before sitting up and again before standing. Sit down again promptly if you have symptoms at any time.
• Avoid sudden changes in posture. Bending suddenly may make your symptoms worse. Try to pause between changes in posture.
• Avoid sitting/standing for long periods. If you do have to stand still, then rock forward on the balls of your feet to encourage blood flow.
• Raise the head of your bed with blocks. (An occupational therapist can advise on this).
• Wear support stockings or tights. This helps return blood to the heart. Take them off before going to bed.

What can I eat and drink to help my symptoms?
• Increase your fluid intake. You need to drink 3-4 pints (1.5-2 litres) of fluid per day, aiming to keep your urine clear all day.
• Eat small frequent meals. Some patients have large drops in blood pressure one or two hours after meals.
• Avoid excess alcohol. This will make your symptoms worse.
• Continue to use normal salt to maintain your sodium intake.

Medication:
There are medications available including Fludrocortisone but you will need to consult your doctor, as it is a prescription only drug.