

DIZZINESS WHEN YOU STAND UP (ORTHOSTASIS)

♥ WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Aside from dizziness when you stand up or walk, other symptoms may include fainting, blurry vision, nausea, clammy feeling, “head rush”, fatigue, and headache.

Symptoms may be worse or more likely to occur when you are dehydrated, when the weather is hot, when you have been sweating, when you have been in a hot tub or shower, when you haven’t eaten in a while, when you stand still for a long time, when you when you get up in the middle of the night to urinate, or when you drink alcohol or caffeine-containing beverages.

♥ WHAT CAUSES THIS PROBLEM?

When you stand up about 30% of your blood volume pools in your legs. Your body adjusts by constricting the blood vessels in the legs and your heart will often beat more quickly and more vigorously. For some people, this adjustment doesn’t happen or happens too slowly, leading to low blood pressure to your brain and a feeling of dizziness.

Medicines including those to treat high blood pressure sometimes can make this problem worse.

Some medical conditions can make this problem worse, including diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, and some nervous system problems

Sometimes young, healthy and active people have this problem; often this is due to inadequate salt intake (not adequately replacing fluid and salt that is lost every day in sweating, breathing, and urinating).

♥ WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL BETTER?

If you experience dizziness when standing, ALWAYS sit down or lie down right away; if you ignore your symptoms you might faint. Have something to drink, particularly something with salt in it such as Gatorade or V8 or sports drink. Before you stand up, wiggle your toes, move your feet and legs around. Don’t stand up again until you feel back to normal.

Try knee-high compression stockings, especially if you know you will be on your feet a lot. Put them on in the morning and remove at bedtime. These are available in most drug stores.

Make sure you have adequate salt and water intake throughout the day, including at breakfast. You will need at least 2 grams of sodium per day; some people need up to 5 grams. Before increasing your salt intake please discuss this with your physician. High salt foods include tomato juice or V8 juice, most broths or soups, pickles, cottage cheese, olives.

Consider elevating the head of your bed by 2-4 inches, gradually over a period of a few weeks. This allows your brain to adjust to the upright position a little more quickly.

Walking and other exercise helps your circulation.

If these measures do not help, talk to your physician about medications that you can take to increase your blood pressure. These medicines have side effects and are not for everyone. In addition, posture training may help.

We are pleased to answer your questions on this matter or discuss your condition with other health care professionals.

Presbyterian Heart Group
201 Cedar SE, Suite 7600; Albuquerque, NM 87106
505-563-2500 or 800-734-4278