



## ORTHOSTATIC HYPOTENSION

### What is Orthostatic Hypotension (OH)?

- OH is a significant drop in blood pressure (20/10 mm Hg) within a few minutes of getting up after lying down.
- The common symptoms are dizziness, lightheadedness, headaches and blurred vision.
- It is common in the morning after resting during the night.
- It can also occur up to 90 minutes after eating a meal.

### Causes

- Normal age-related change
- Deconditioning
- Medication side effect
- Dehydration
- Diabetes
- Pernicious anemia
- Strokes

### What Can You Do

- Drink at least 6 – 8 eight-ounce glasses of non-caffeinated fluid every day. **If you have heart failure or kidney problems ask your doctor how much fluids you can safely have.**
- Drink alcohol in moderation - **no more** than 1 drink/day.
- Use salt in your diet only if you do **NOT** have high blood pressure.
- Avoid large meals; especially meals high in carbohydrate.
- Avoid activities or sudden standing immediately after eating.
- Sleep with the head of your bed elevated about 10-20 ° (Place 3" – 4" size wood blocks under the bed legs at the head of the bed; these blocks are available through Red Cross)
- Get up slowly.
- Sit on the side of your bed with your feet hanging for a minute before rising; this is called 'dangling'.
- Talk with your doctor as there may be medications that can help.
- See a physiotherapist for isometric exercises that can help regulate your blood pressure.
- Consult your family doctor or a medical supply store for information about compression stockings; these stockings can help decrease OH.