

Hypotension

What is hypotension?

Hypotension is a condition that causes blood pressure (BP) to drop lower than 120/80 mmHg. Hypotension may be mild, serious, or life-threatening.

(WHO has defined a blood pressure of below 100 / 60 mmHg in women and less than 110 / 70 mmHg in men as hypotension)

What are the most common types of hypotension?

- **Acute:** Acute hypotension is a sudden drop in BP that may be life-threatening.
- **Orthostatic:** Orthostatic hypotension normally occurs when person stand up from a sitting or lying position. It is also called postural hypotension.
- **Postprandial:** Postprandial hypotension means BP becomes too low after person eat a meal. BP may drop within 2 hours after eating, and is more common when person eat meals high in carbohydrates.

What causes hypotension?

- Anemia or blood loss
- Nervous system, heart, or adrenal disorders
- Dehydration from not drinking enough liquids, frequent vomiting, diarrhea, or severe burns
- Some medicines, such as those used to treat high blood pressure, heart conditions, pain, depression, or cancer
- A blood infection (sepsis)

What increases risk for hypotension?

- Increasing age
- Drug and alcohol use
- Being bedridden for a long period of time
- Low body weight
- Hemodialysis
- Medical conditions such as diabetes, Parkinson disease, and Alzheimer disease

What are the signs and symptoms of hypotension?

- Feeling anxious, nauseated, tired
- Lightheadedness, dizziness, or fainting
- Increased sweating, palpitations (fast, forceful heartbeats), tremors
- Headache or pain in neck, shoulders, chest, lower back, buttocks, or legs
- Blurred vision or changes in vision
- Confusion, decreased memory

Symptoms management

- ✓ Change your position slowly
- ✓ Avoid straining
- ✓ Avoid the heat
- ✓ Exercise regularly as suggested by your doctor
- ✓ Drink liquids.
- ✓ Maintain healthy eating habits
- ✓ Do not drink alcohol

How is hypotension diagnosed?

Blood pressure testing: This may be done while patient is at lie down, sitting or standing position.

Tilt table testing: patient is secured on a table that changes position. patient's BP is checked when the table moves to each position.

How is hypotension treated?

- **Compression stockings or abdominal binder:** These may help blood return to heart and decrease hypotension.
- **IV fluids:** These may be used to increase BP if patient is dehydrated or have blood loss or sepsis.
- **Medicines:**
 - **Alpha-adreno receptor agonists:** These medicines may increase BP and decrease symptoms.
 - **Steroids:** This medicine helps prevent salt loss from body. Steroids may also help increase the amount of fluid in body and raise BP.
 - **Vasopressors:** These medicines help constrict (make smaller) blood vessels and increase BP. Vasopressor medicines may increase the blood flow to brain and help to decrease symptoms.
 - **Antidiuretic hormone:** This medicine helps control BP and helps to decrease urination during the night.
 - **Antiparkinson medicine:** This medicine may help increase standing BP and decrease symptoms.

Reference:

Micromedex's Care Notes System Online 2.0