



# Postural Hypotension... 'Fainting'

After a spinal injury the part of the nervous system that controls the blood circulation, the autonomic nervous system, is usually "re-set" at a lower level. This means that your blood pressure will probably be lower than before your injury. If you have tetraplegia (quadriplegia), your blood pressure may be as low as 90/60 mm Hg.

Fainting, also called postural hypotension, is a common problem, especially in the morning when you get out of bed after a long bed rest. If you get up too quickly you may faint because your body cannot adapt its blood pressure to the upright posture as quickly. The drop in your blood pressure can be exacerbated leading to decrease in organ perfusion especially in the brain.

## How can I help prevent fainting?

If fainting or feeling dizzy is a problem for you:

- Get up more slowly – sit up in bed for a while before getting into your wheelchair
- Wear special elastic (TED) stockings and/or an elastic abdominal binder (corset). This will help to keep your blood pressure higher
- Check with your doctor whether changes should be made to your medication.

## What should I do if I feel faint?

- If you are in your wheelchair, ask someone to raise your legs or if safe to do so, apply the brakes to your chair and tip the chair back. This makes it easier for the blood to return to your heart and head
- If your wheelchair is motorised, it may be possible to lower the adjustable backrest to allow your blood flow to return to normal
- If you are in bed, make sure that you are lying flat, to make it easier for the blood to return to your heart and head.



## Further information

- Contact your local doctor or specialist
- Contact your occupational therapist (OT) for equipment prescription
- For information regarding elastic stockings or a corset, speak to your local doctor who can refer you to a pharmacist or medical supplies store

