



**FRANKLIN
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Orthostatic Hypotension

Part 1 of 6

Orthostatic hypotension is defined as a decrease in systolic blood pressure greater than or equal to 20 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure greater than or equal to 10 mmHg within three minutes of one assuming the upright position. Most of the time by two minutes, one could get a reliable estimate if orthostatic hypotension is present. If someone has significant supine high blood pressure or hypotension, that is when they are lying down their blood pressure is greater than 160 systolic, we often require a systolic blood pressure drop of 30 mmHg or greater. There are occasional rare cases where we see delayed orthostatic hypotension when the blood pressure will drop after three minutes, and this may actually represent a mild form of an abnormality of the sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system is like the accelerator of a car, and the parasympathetic nervous system is like the brakes of a car. This is an analogy that we often use. An accelerated sympathetic nervous system will raise heart rate and blood pressure

When syncope, or fainting, occurs, studies have shown that orthostatic hypotension may be responsible for about ten percent of the time for this. In one European study, up to a quarter of syncope-associated complaints were associated with orthostatic hypotension in the emergency room. Orthostatic hypotension, or more specifically neurogenic orthostatic hypotension, as it is often referred to, usually occurs in about one-fifth of patients over the age of 65 years of age and increases with age. Many hospitalized patients, if they are tested, will show this, even if they are not symptomatic. In addition, if one shows evidence of orthostatic hypotension, it is a strong predictor of future cardiovascular events and is in itself an adverse marker portending a worse prognosis in patients who have it. Patients who have severe drops in orthostatic hypotension are even more jeopardized to have future cardiovascular events and, of course, falls as time goes on. It is a serious disorder that needs to be recognized and treated aggressively.