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Why Does Standing Up Feel So Hard? The "Gravity Battle" in hEDS and HSD

If you live with **Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (hEDS)** or **Hypermobility Spectrum Disorder (HSD)**, you probably know the feeling: you stand up to start your day, and suddenly your heart is racing, your head feels foggy, and you're hit with a wave of exhaustion.

It turns out, your body is fighting a literal battle with gravity. For the vast majority of patients with these conditions, the "glue" that holds the body together (connective tissue) is stretchy, but the "wiring" that controls the body (the nervous system) is also glitching.

The Two Main "Wiring" Glitches

Your Autonomic Nervous System has two main branches: the **Sympathetic** (the gas pedal) and the **Parasympathetic** (the brake pedal). In hEDS/HSD, these often malfunction in two specific ways:

- 1. Sympathetic Withdrawal (The Failed Gas Pedal):** Usually, when you stand up, your sympathetic nerves tell your blood vessels to tighten up, pushing blood upward to your brain. In many patients, this signal fails. The "gas pedal" cuts out, blood pools in your legs, and your brain is left "starving" for blood flow.
- 2. Parasympathetic Excess (The Stuck Brake):** Sometimes, when your body is under stress, the "brake pedal" slams down too hard. This can cause sudden drops in heart rate or energy when you actually need a boost.

How "Poor Blood Flow" Mimics Other Illnesses

Because your blood isn't being pumped efficiently to the top half of your body (a problem called **poor perfusion**), your organs start to send out distress signals. These signals are often mistaken for other serious diseases:

- **Heart & Lungs:** You might feel palpitations, chest pain, or shortness of breath. Often, the heart is perfectly healthy—it's just struggling because it doesn't have enough blood to pump!



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- **Brain & Mood:** When the brain doesn't get enough blood, it can cause **brain fog, fatigue, and fainting**. It can even trigger or worsen **anxiety, depression, ADHD, or OCD**. Your brain is essentially "revving" itself to stay awake and alert despite the low fuel.
- **Digestion:** These same nerves control how food moves through your gut. When the wiring glitches, you get stomach pain, bloating, or bathroom issues.

The Difference Between "Stretchy" and "Dangerous"

While hEDS and HSD are the most common types, there is a much rarer form called **Vascular EDS (vEDS)**. It is vital to know the difference:

- **hEDS/HSD:** Usually involves "stretchy" skin, loose joints that pop out (subluxations), easy bruising, and chronic pain. While it makes life very difficult, it is not typically life-threatening.
- **Vascular EDS:** This involves the blood vessels and organs themselves being fragile. **Red flags** include a family history of aneurysms, ruptured blood vessels, or intestinal tears—especially in people under 40.

The Path Forward: Testing the Wiring

The good news is that your organs are usually healthy! The problem is the **P&S (Parasympathetic and Sympathetic) nerves** that tell them what to do.

Specialized testing can help your doctor see exactly how your "wiring" is misfiring. Once you understand your specific needs, you can start a treatment plan—like salt, fluids, compression gear, or medication—to help your body win the battle against gravity.