

LOW BLOOD PRESSURE AND DIZZINESS WORKSHEET

Dizziness or lightheadedness can occur as a direct symptom of Parkinson's or as a side effect of some Parkinson's medications. You can also experience lightheadedness if you do not drink enough fluids or restrict salt in your diet.

Parkinson's may lower your blood pressure, as can the medications used to treat the movement symptoms of Parkinson's. This worksheet provides helpful lifestyle changes you can make to address low blood pressure and dizziness. Check the changes you can make now, but be sure to discuss with your doctor to identify root causes and other potential solutions. For more information about how to address low blood pressure and dizziness, consult the "Neurogenic Orthostatic Hypotension (nOH) in Parkinson's" article in the **What You Need to Know About Parkinson's** section.

Dietary Changes

- Increase fluid intake to eight cups per day. Caffeine can help, but use in moderation. Sports drinks and salty drinks such as Gatorade or V8 are helpful, but may not be safe if you have diabetes, hypertension or heart disease. Check with your doctor before you make any changes.
- Get in the habit of drinking a full cup of water every time you take a dose of your medication.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Add salt to your diet if approved by your doctor.
- Eat small meals to avoid blood pressure drops that can occur after large meals.
- Reduce your consumption of high-glycemic carbohydrates, like white breads, rice and pastas, sugary juices, cereals and sweets.
- Increase your consumption of low-glycemic index carbohydrates, like whole-grain breads, rice and pasta, fruits and nuts.

Lifestyle Changes

- Elevate the head of your bed by 30° by placing blocks under the legs of your bed or getting a mattress that can be easily adjusted. Simply adding more pillows may not help.
- Stand slowly to give your blood pressure time to adjust to a change in position.

EVERY VICTORY COUNTS

- ▶ Wear compression stockings to help keep fluid in your blood vessels and reduce leg swelling.
- Avoid holding your breath or contracting your stomach muscles excessively when standing.

Treatment

- Review your medications with your doctor. Many medications, including Parkinson's medications, can reduce your blood pressure.
- Physical therapy can show you exercises that can reduce drops in blood pressure when standing, such as contracting your leg muscles before you stand.
- Talk to your doctor about medications to increase blood pressure if other measures are not helpful.
- If you take medications for high blood pressure, speak to your doctor about whether you still need them.
- Treat constipation, since straining may cause dizziness.