

## Drinking water can be beneficial to patients with low blood pressure.

Ordinary tap or bottled water could help people suffering from low blood pressure, who faint whilst standing.

Researchers from Imperial College London and St. Mary's Hospital, led by STARS patron Professor Chris Mathias say drinking two glasses of water can raise blood pressure, potentially providing a solution for patients with low blood pressure whilst standing, caused by autonomic failure.



The research was published in December's issue of Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry. Professor Mathias, said: "This surprising discovery that water can have such an effect on blood pressure could help us to treat both sufferers of autonomic failure, and many people who suffer from low blood pressure generally, especially those who faint, such as with vasovagal syncope." The researchers looked at 14 patients with autonomic failure, and measured their blood pressure while lying and standing, before, and 15 and 35 minutes after drinking 480ml of distilled water. When asked to stand, before drinking water, this caused a fall in blood pressure.

The patients were divided into two groups, seven of whom had multiple system atrophy (MSA), while the other seven had pure autonomic failure (PAF). MSA is a neurodegenerative disease marked by a combination of symptoms affecting movement, blood pressure, and other body functions. PAF is a disorder affecting only the autonomic nervous system. They both often present in middle to late life.

The patients then drank water causing a significant rise in blood pressure. The patients with PAF took five minutes for a significant rise in blood pressure to be noted, while for patients with MSA, it took 13 minutes. In both, the fall in blood pressure and symptoms of low blood pressure were reduced whilst standing.

Professor Mathias said: "While autonomic failure itself is generally not life threatening, it can have a significant impact on an individual's quality of life. People with low blood pressure caused by autonomic failure are at a greater risk of fainting when standing upright, after food or even after mild exertion".

"This can affect their life in many ways, stopping them from driving, or in extreme cases, being able to work. This discovery could be of considerable use in helping these patients to understand why this happens. It may also benefit the many without autonomic failure who faint as a result of low blood pressure."

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