TABLE 454-6 SOME DRUGS THAT AFFECT AUTONOMIC FUNCTION

Symptom	Drug Class	Specific Examples
Impotence	Opioids	Tylenol #3
	Anabolic steroids	—
	Some antiarrhythmics	Prazosin
	Some antihypertensives	Clonidine
	Some diuretics	Benazepril
	Some SSRIs	Venlafaxine
Urinary retention	Opioids	Fentanyl
	Decongestants	Brompheniramine
		Diphenhydramine
Diaphoresis	Some antihypertensives	Amlodipine
	Some SSRIs	Citalopram
	Opioids	Morphine
Hypotension	Tricyclics	Amitriptyline
	Beta blockers	Propranolol
	Diuretics	HCTZ
	CCBs	Verapamil

Abbreviations: CCBs, calcium channel blockers; HCTZ, hydrochlorothiazide; SSRIs, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors.

should be sought. Standing time to first symptom and to presyncope (Chap. 27) should be followed for management.

Physical examination includes measurement of supine and standing pulse and BP. OH is defined as a sustained drop in systolic (≥20 mmHg) or diastolic (≥10 mmHg) BP after 2–3 min of standing. In nonneurogenic causes of OH (such as hypovolemia), the BP drop is accompanied by a compensatory increase in heart rate of >15 beats/min. A clue that the patient has neurogenic OH is the aggravation or precipitation of OH by autonomic stressors (a meal, hot bath, or exercise). Neurologic examination should include mental status (neurodegenerative disorders), cranial nerves (impaired downgaze with progressive supranuclear palsy; abnormal pupils with Horner's or Adie's syndrome), motor tone (Parkinson's disease and parkinsonism), and sensation (polyneuropathies). In patients without a clear diagnosis initially, follow-up evaluations every few months or whenever symptoms worsen may reveal the underlying cause.

Disorders of autonomic function should be considered in patients with symptoms of altered sweating (hyperhidrosis or hypohidrosis), gastroparesis (bloating, nausea, vomiting of old food), impotence, constipation, or bladder disturbances (urinary frequency, hesitancy, or incontinence).

AUTONOMIC TESTING

Autonomic function tests are helpful to document abnormalities when findings on history and examination are inconclusive; to detect subclinical involvement; or to follow the course of an autonomic disorder.

Heart Rate Variation with Deep Breathing This tests the parasympathetic component of cardiovascular reflexes via the vagus nerve. Results are influenced by multiple factors including the subject's position (recumbent, sitting, or standing), rate and depth of respiration (6 breaths per minute and a forced vital capacity [FVC] >1.5 L are optimal), age, medications, weight, and degree of hypocapnia. Interpretation of results requires comparison of test data with results from age-matched controls collected under identical test conditions. For example, the lower limit of normal heart rate variation with deep breathing in persons <20 years is >15–20 beats/min, but for persons over age 60 it is 5–8 beats/min. Heart rate variation with deep breathing (respiratory sinus arrhythmia) is abolished by the muscarinic ACh receptor antagonist atropine but is unaffected by sympathetic postganglionic blockade (e.g., propranolol).

Valsalva Response This response (Table 454-7) assesses the integrity of the baroreflex control of heart rate (parasympathetic) and BP (adrenergic). Under normal conditions, increases in BP at the carotid bulb trigger a reduction in heart rate (increased vagal tone), and decreases in BP trigger an increase in heart rate (reduced vagal tone). The Valsalva response is tested in the supine position. The subject exhales against a closed glottis (or into a manometer maintaining a constant expiratory pressure of 40 mmHg) for 15 s while measuring changes in heart rate and beat-to-beat BP. There are four phases of the BP and heart rate response to the Valsalva maneuver. Phases I and III are mechanical and related to changes in intrathoracic and intraabdominal pressure. In early phase II, reduced venous return results in a fall in stroke volume and BP, counteracted by a combination of reflex tachycardia and increased total peripheral resistance. Increased total peripheral resistance arrests the BP drop ~5–8 s after the onset of the maneuver. Late phase II begins with a progressive rise in BP toward or above baseline. Venous return and cardiac output return to normal in phase IV. Persistent peripheral arteriolar vasoconstriction and increased cardiac adrenergic tone result in a temporary BP overshoot and phase IV bradycardia (mediated by the baroreceptor reflex).

Autonomic function during the Valsalva maneuver can be measured using beat-to-beat BP or heart rate changes. The *Valsalva ratio* is defined as the maximum phase II tachycardia divided by the minimum phase IV bradycardia (Table 454-8). The ratio reflects the integrity of the entire baroreceptor reflex arc and of sympathetic efferents to blood vessels.

Sudomotor Function Sweating is induced by release of ACh from sympathetic postganglionic fibers. The quantitative sudomotor axon reflex test (QSART) is a measure of regional autonomic function mediated by ACh-induced sweating. A reduced or absent response indicates a lesion of the postganglionic sudomotor axon. For example, sweating may be reduced in the feet as a result of distal polyneuropathy (e.g., diabetes). The thermoregulatory sweat test (TST) is a qualitative measure of regional sweat production in response to an elevation of body temperature under controlled conditions. An indicator powder placed on the anterior surface of the body changes color with sweat production during temperature

TABLE 454-7 NORMAL BLOOD PRESSURE AND HEART RATE CHANGES DURING THE VALSALVA MANEUVER

Phase	Maneuver	Blood Pressure	Heart Rate	Comments
I	Forced expiration against a partially closed glottis	Rises; aortic compression from raised intrathoracic pressure	Decreases	Mechanical
II *early*	Continued expiration	Falls; decreased venous return to the heart	Increases (reflex tachycardia)	Reduced vagal tone
II *late*	Continued expiration	Rises; reflex increase in peripheral vascular resistance	Increases at slower rate	Requires intact efferent sympathetic response
III	End of expiration	Falls; increased capacitance of pulmonary bed	Increases further	Mechanical
IV	Recovery	Rises; persistent vasoconstriction and increased cardiac output	Compensatory bradycardia	Requires intact efferent sympathetic response