

## Vasovagal Syncope (The Common Faint)

Syncope, or fainting, is a brief loss of consciousness and not being able to stand up.

**Vasovagal** syncope is due to changes within the body's nervous system, blood vessels, and heart, with not enough blood going to the brain. This is also referred to as **neurocardiogenic syncope**, or **the common faint**. This type of fainting is **not** caused by any problem with the heart's structure or rhythm.

While not a severe problem, we know that this can cause problems with normal daily life. People who have fainting can also feel dizzy when standing.

### Actions Linked to Fainting

- Prolonged standing, more so in a warm setting
- Changing from lying or sitting to standing
- Painful events
- Events that cause pain, fear or anxiety
- Hair combing/grooming
- Urination

Before fainting, a person often will feel dizzy, nauseous, sweaty, and notice his/her vision getting dark. He/she will often look pale.

### Treatment

The goal of treatment is to prevent repeat fainting.

### Fluids

The most crucial part of treatment is to increase the body's fluid volume.

- Drink at least 80 ounces of water or liquids without caffeine daily.
- When you exercise or in hot weather, you will need to drink more fluid to make up for the loss of fluid.
- Limit the amount of caffeine in your diet as this causes your body to lose fluid and can dehydrate you.

An easy way to know whether you are drinking enough fluid is to look at the color of your urine. Your urine should be very pale in color to almost clear. Dark, yellow urine may be a sign that you need to drink more fluid.

### Diet

- Eating regular meals will also help prevent symptoms and fainting spells.
- Avoid low salt (sodium) diets.
- Eat salty snacks in between meals.

### Tips to Prevent Fainting

- Sit or lie down as soon as you begin to feel dizzy, notice your vision dimming or getting dark, or have a cold sweat.
- Change positions slowly. Do not jump out of bed or stand up too quickly.
- Regular exercise that uses the muscles in the legs such as walking, running, or squatting can improve symptoms.
- When standing up, squeeze your leg and butt muscles to help increase the blood flow to your head.

**Medicines**

The tips in this handout often work very well in treating this type of fainting. If you keep having fainting spells after you have followed these tips, certain medicines can help to control symptoms. If you have fainting episodes during exercise, please contact us, we may want to see you in clinic.

**Who to Call**

Pediatric Cardiology Clinic  
**(608) 263-6420**

Adult Congenital Heart Disease  
**(608) 890-5700**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 2/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6597