

**Patient  
Information**

# Fainting (vasovagal syncope)

## Introduction

This leaflet gives information for people who suffer from vasovagal syncope (fainting).

## What is vasovagal syncope?

Vasovagal syncope is common and can affect anyone. It means that the blood pressure drops too low making people suffer syncope (fainting) symptoms.

Although the exact cause is not fully understood, it is often a temporary problem affecting the autonomic nervous system (the body's control system) meaning that the blood pressure drops too low making people suffer fainting symptoms.

## Why does it happen?

Certain triggers affect the nerve messages which cause the heart rate and blood pressure to lower. This can make you feel weak, nauseous (feeling sick), sweaty and light-headed which then can lead to loss of consciousness. This can happen without any warning.

## What can I do?

- Try not to stand still for long periods, take long hot baths or eat large heavy meals. You should also avoid overly warm environments and standing up too quickly
- Drink plenty of fluids, especially in hot weather
- Do not ignore symptoms which may happen before you faint

## If you get warning symptoms

- Try lying down flat or putting your head between your knees
- Squatting down can be very helpful
- If you are unable to sit down, rock backwards and forwards on your heels
- Squeezing firmly on a ball, may also be helpful

Reference No.

**GHPI0721\_03\_25**

Department

**Emergency**

Review due

**March 2028**

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When you have recovered you should get up carefully. If your symptoms return or worsen squat or lie down again.

If you know you have certain triggers, that you cannot avoid, take early precautions. For example, if getting up from lying causes this to happen make sure you sit up first, then sit with your legs dangling over the bed. You should then stand and wait before walking away from the bed. If you experience the symptoms during these actions, go back a step

**What other treatments are available?**

Various medications have been used to treat vasovagal syncope. Your GP may discuss the treatment options with you if your fainting becomes very regular.

**Further information**

For further information please discuss with your GP or visit the NHS UK website.

**NHS UK**

Website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/fainting/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fainting/)

You can also contact:

**The Falls Clinic**

If you are over 65 years old, you may be referred to the Falls Clinic.

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital  
Great Western Road  
Gloucester  
GL1 3NN

Tel: 0300 422 8547

If you sustain an injury following a vasovagal syncope and are concerned whether you need treatment, please contact NHS 111 for advice.

**NHS 111**

Tel: 111

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## Making a choice

### Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



### Ask 3 Questions

**To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.**

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation\* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85

<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>