

**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
- In you are unable to sit down, rock backwards and forwards on your heels
- Squeezing firmly on a ball, may also be helpful

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## After an episode

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/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fainting/)

You can also contact:

### 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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