



Fainting (Vasovagal syncope)

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

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What is fainting?

Vasovagal syncope is the medical term for a brief loss of consciousness (fainting). About 40% of people will faint in their lifetime. It is unknown why this fainting reaction happens more often to some people and not to others. Some people seem to have more powerful “vagal” reactions in certain situations.

Being susceptible to fainting is not a serious illness. It can be very frightening and frustrating for you and your child. With advice and understanding of the problem, most people can avoid or minimise most faints. Worrying will only tend to make it worse.

It is important to understand what is happening to your child during a faint. Ask your doctor for more explanation if you don't fully understand what fainting is or if you have any more questions.

What makes you faint?

Fainting happens when your blood pressure drops. Sometimes the heart rate will drop or pause for a very short time.

Common reasons for fainting include:

- Standing or sitting in the same position for a long period of time.
- Not eating or drinking enough
- Being in a stressful situation
- Seeing blood or having an injection
- In hot environments
- Illnesses such as diarrhoea, vomiting, infections and flu

Symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Sickness
- Blurred vision
- Sounds can become muffled or they might complain of ringing in their ears
- Looking pale



If your child has any of these following symptoms during a faint you must **seek medical attention immediately by contacting 999**

- Chest pain, severe breathlessness or severe headache before collapsing
- Fitting with stiffness and/or jerky movements immediately on collapsing
- Not breathing or going blue whilst unconscious
- Prolonged unconsciousness, lasting more than 5 minutes once lying down.

What to do if your child feels faint?

If the symptoms of fainting occur sit or lie your child down. Rest their legs slightly above them on a pillow or a chair. When they feel better sit them up slowly. If they still feel faint, lie them back down.

If your child is old enough and able to, there are some exercises they can do to help prevent fainting. These are called counter pressure exercises; they increase the blood flow around the body and increase the blood pressure. Your child can do these exercises lying, sitting or standing.

Squeeze and relaxing muscles:
Such as stomach, buttocks, arm and leg muscles. Keep squeezing and relaxing these muscles until the symptoms go away.

After a faint your child may feel sickly. They may vomit or have diarrhoea. They can feel tired and drained after a faint. Allow them to recover in their own time.

How to avoid fainting

- Keep your child well hydrated.
- Avoid overly crowded and hot environments.
- Avoid them standing for long periods of time.
- Avoid caffeine and energy drinks
- Eat regular, well balanced meals
- Exercise regularly

If you have any concerns about your child's condition please contact the Children's Unit or your GP.

Children's Unit
0161 922 5252

If you require this leaflet to be printed in to any other language please contact the Ethnic Health team on 0161 922 5150.
Source of Good Practice

References

Royal Brompton Hospital (2017) - Vasovagal Syncope . Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Foundation Trust

James Paget University Hospitals – Faints (Vasovagal syncope)

Further information:

www.stars.org.uk

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

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