

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

What is vasovagal syncope ?

This is the medical term for the simple faint and is a benign condition. It is caused by blood pooling in the legs, for example, after standing for long periods. This causes your blood pressure to drop suddenly and sometimes your heart rate can slow. This leads to dizziness, light-headedness, falls and blackouts. It is very common and occurs in 50% of people at least once in their life. It can happen at any age but is more common in young adults and the elderly.

What are the symptoms before fainting?

- Feeling very hot, cold or perspiring
- Light headed, visual disturbance, nausea
- Heavy legs
- Heavy panting/puffing
- Observers notice you to go very pale

What can I do if I feel light-headed or about to faint?

- Act quickly to prevent symptoms and reduce the chances of blacking out.
- Sit down immediately and put your head between your knees.
- Squatting down on ones heels is less likely to attract attention in public.
- If possible lie down & try to put your legs in the air against a wall or on a chair.
- Get up slowly when you feel well again, but if your symptoms return sit down/lie down immediately.

What can I do to prevent fainting?

Non drug treatment

- Drink plenty of fluids, ideally 1.5-2 litres/day
- Avoid prolonged standing – if unavoidable then clench and unclench your calf muscles or rock forward on the balls of your feet to encourage blood flow
- Avoid prolonged sitting–if unavoidable,cross & uncross your legs before standing
- Avoid large meals (eat small meals often)
- Avoid alcohol – this will lower your blood pressure
- Be careful in warm weather, avoid overheating
- Use high leg support tights during the day, remove at night-see your GP about this
- Drink strong tea or coffee(no more than 5 cups/day) to prevent low blood pressure
- Raise the head of the bed about 6 inches e.g. 2 heavy books under the bed legs
- Increase the amount of salt in your diet (only if advised by your GP/Consultant)

Drug/other treatments

- Drugs are used if the above measures are ineffective.
- There are a number of drugs that can be used which will be discussed with you as each have their benefits but also side effects.
- Sometimes pacemakers are required to prevent further faints but this is rare.