

## **FAINTING**

Fainting (syncope) is a sudden, temporary loss of consciousness due to insufficient oxygen supply to the brain. The most frequent signs and symptoms are sudden lightheadedness, generalized weakness, and then falling. These signs and symptoms can be accompanied by blurred vision, nausea, paleness, sweating, rapid heartbeat and rapid breathing. If heartbeat or breathing is not present, this may represent cardiac arrest rather than fainting.

The major cause of fainting is a sudden decrease in blood flow to the brain. This in turn may result from: heartbeat anomalies (too fast, too slow, or irregular); prolonged straining, such as from severe coughing or attempted bowel movements when constipated; sudden emotional stress; heart diseases which limit the amount of blood the heart pumps; getting out of bed or a chair too fast (orthostatic hypotension); acute pain; epilepsy, or heart attack.

The risks of fainting increase with stress; heart disease; some drugs (digitalis, beta-adrenergic blockers); hot humid weather; elderly; and diabetes mellitus. Naturally, preventive measures would be avoidance of the above listed causes. Possible complications could be injuries while fainting, or mistaking cardiac arrest for fainting.

If you are present when someone faints, check for breathing and a neck pulse. If neither is present, dial 911 for medical help, and then begin cardio pulmonary resuscitation. Don't stop until help arrives. If someone faints, is breathing and has a pulse, leave the person on the ground and elevate both legs. This helps return blood to the heart and brain. If you feel faint, sit down immediately and bend over, or lie down.

If you are subject to frequent fainting spells, avoid activities in which fainting may endanger your life, such as climbing to high places, driving vehicles or operating dangerous machinery. Diagnostic tests for an underlying cause may include CT scan, MRI or EEG. Medications may be necessary for underlying disorders, but must be individualized.

We at the Health Center will be happy to help you.



**Healthfully yours,**

**Dr. Healthberry**

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For questions or comments you can;

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