

Advice for patients who tend to faint (Vasovagal Syncope)

This leaflet provides information and advice for patients who tend to faint. Fainting is medically known as Vasovagal Syncope (VVS).



Fainting occurs when your blood pressure drops, and the blood is slower to reach the brain.



Your heart may also slow down for a short time.



You may look pale and feel dizzy, sweaty or sick. Sounds may become distant, and your vision may be blurred.



It can cause blackouts in some people.

Certain triggers can cause this and recognising your own triggers is key.



Examples include:

- Standing or sitting for a prolonged period
- Dehydration or extreme heat
- Stressful or emotional situations
- Seeing blood or having an injection.

Vasovagal syncope is not life threatening and with the following measures most people will be able to control their symptoms.

What should I do when I get symptoms?

It is important to recognise what your warning symptoms are. The second you feel them coming on:



Sit down immediately.



If possible, lie down flat and put your legs in the air, for example on top of a pillow, or up against a wall or chair.



Clench and unclench your fists.

Squeeze the muscles in your legs and buttocks.



All of the above help get blood back up to the brain.



Acting quickly will help prevent the episode – the longer your symptoms, the more likely it is that you will blackout.



Get up cautiously when you feel well again, but if you have further symptoms, be prepared to sit down promptly.



What should I do to stop symptoms?

The most important thing is to know what triggers your symptoms.



The following should help:

Prolonged sitting or standing

Try to avoid this, for example at a bus stop or a check out queue.



If unavoidable, do fist, buttock and calf clenching exercises.

If standing, rock forward on the balls of your feet to encourage blood flow.

Heat



Avoid overheating as this can lower your blood pressure further, for example in hot department stores or restaurants.

Fluids



Drink 1.5-2 litres of fluids by lunchtime then sufficient fluids to keep your urine clear for the rest of the day.



Alcohol

Avoid excess alcohol as this drops your blood pressure.