

# Fainting - Prevention

## Definition

- Fainting is a sudden loss of consciousness and falling down
- A return to being awake and alert happens within a minute or so
- Also called passing out or blacking out
- The medical name for fainting is syncope
- This handout can help you prevent the most common types of fainting

## Health Information

### Simple Fainting Basics

- **Age of Onset.** Simple fainting is mostly from standing too long in one place. It happens in over 20% of healthy teens. Simple fainting doesn't occur before age 6. It is not common before age 10.
- **Causes.** In healthy teens, almost all are simple, benign fainting. Less than 1% have a serious medical cause. In older adults, serious causes are much more common.
- **Risk Factors for Having a Simple Faint.** Dehydration, fasting, hot weather, lack of sleep, recent illness. All of these increase the risk of a sudden drop in blood flow to the brain.

### Simple Fainting (Benign Fainting): Types

- Standing too long in one place before fainting is the most common type. Happens at church, weddings or at events when standing a long time. More common if one keeps the knees "locked". This pools the blood in the leg veins. Any person who stands long enough in one place will faint.
- Standing up quickly (often after lying down) before fainting is a less common cause. Often this just causes a person to feel dizzy for a short time. More common in the morning after not eating or drinking during the night.
- Sudden stressful feelings before fainting. Seeing a badly injured person or pet can trigger fainting. Other examples are seeing someone vomit, bleed or pass a stool. Also, stressful events such as speaking or performing in public can cause fainting.
- Sudden physical pain before fainting. Getting a shot or having stitches taken out can also trigger fainting. The stress of the event may cause the fainting rather than the pain itself.

### Fainting: How to Diagnose the Cause

- Fainting has many causes. Most are harmless or even normal. A few of them are serious.
- Any child with fainting needs a complete exam by their doctor.
- If your child has not been seen about their fainting, make an appointment.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Fainting is common and happens in 20% of teens.
- Standing too long in one place is the most common cause. Reason: blood pools in the veins in the legs.
- Standing up quickly after lying down can also cause anyone to feel dizzy. If your child doesn't sit down when this happens, they may faint.
- These are normal types of fainting.
- Simple fainting doesn't cause any long-term problems.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. **When Dizzy, Lie Down or Sit Down Quickly:**
  - Most fainting can be prevented.
  - Learn the early warning signs for fainting. They are feeling dizzy, blurry vision, and nausea.
  - If you feel these warning signs, lie down right away. Reason: This will increase blood flow to the brain.
  - If you can only sit, put your head down by your knees.
  - You only have 5 - 10 seconds to prevent fainting and falling down.
  - Don't be embarrassed. Lie down quickly no matter where you are. Better to do that than faint. Falling down could also cause a face or head injury.
  - Caution: Don't get up too soon or you might faint. Stay down until you feel steady.
3. **Change Positions Slowly:**
  - When getting out of bed, sit on the edge for a few minutes before standing.
  - If you feel dizzy, lie down again.
  - If getting out of a hot tub or bath, go very slowly.
4. **Move Your Leg Muscles:**
  - If long standing in one place is needed, tighten and relax your leg muscles. Do this a few times each minute. This will pump the blood back to your heart. Caution: never stand with your knees locked.
  - Shift positions. Transfer your weight to one leg, then the other.
  - For long sitting in one place, move your feet and legs every few minutes.
  - For the future, exercise more and build up your leg muscles.
5. **Drink Extra Water:**
  - If you tend to faint, extra water is key. Reason: stay well hydrated and improve blood flow.
  - Drink extra fluids every day. Your goal is 8 cups (2 liters) per day.
  - You will need more during sports or hot weather.
  - Also add some salty foods to your diet. Too little salt in your diet, like too much, is not healthy. It can cause low blood pressure.
  - Don't skip meals.
6. **What to Expect After a Faint:**
  - Most children with a simple faint are alert within 1 minute.
  - They feel normal after lying down for 10 minutes and drinking some water.
  - They then can stand without feeling dizzy.

## Call Your Doctor If

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- Fainting happens again and you don't know why
- Fainting happens during exercise
- Fainting becomes a frequent problem
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

### **Pediatric Care Advice**

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