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## Vasovagal Syncope (with reduced salt intake)

Issued by the Falls and Syncope Service



This leaflet is to help you manage the symptoms of your condition.

## What is Vasovagal Syncope?

Vasovagal syncope is also known as the common “faint”. It is caused by pooling of blood in the legs (often through prolonged standing or sitting), which causes a drop in blood pressure, which then stimulates a reflex causing a further huge drop in blood pressure and/or heart rate (pulse). When this happens, insufficient blood gets to the brain, and dizziness and blackouts occur. Promptly being placed in the lying down position rapidly relieves symptoms in most cases. Vasovagal syncope is not life-threatening, and with the following measures, and medication if necessary, is generally easily controlled. The problem also tends to get better with time.

## What can I do to help prevent symptoms?

- Drink 1 1/2 to 2 litres of non-caffeinated fluids in the first few hours of the morning, then sufficient fluids to keep your urine clear for the rest of the day.
- Strong tea or coffee may be helpful in keeping blood pressure up (no more than 5 cups a day).
- Try to keep cool and wear loose fitting clothing and always remove a top layer of clothing when entering a building from outside.
- Cross and uncross your legs when sitting for long periods of time.
- Improving the muscle tone in your legs with regular exercise, such as swimming, helps to return blood to your heart.

## What can I do longer term to help prevent episodes of vasovagal syncope?

- Wear high leg support tights during the day, but remove them before bed.
- Avoid excess alcohol, as this exaggerates symptoms, alcohol dehydrates your body.
- Avoid prolonged sitting or standing, for example in a bus or check-out queue, particularly in warm weather or hot environments, like department stores. If unavoidable, clench and unclench your calf muscles or rock forward on the balls of your feet to encourage blood flow.

Always carry a bottle of water with you. If symptoms occur, sit down and take large gulps of water.

### Immediate Action

The following measures will help to prevent episodes of vasovagal syncope. As soon as you feel your usual symptoms coming on:-

- Sit down immediately
- If possible lie down flat
- If possible raise your legs in the air, for example against a wall.

Acting quickly will help prevent or reduce the severity of the episode.

Sit up slowly and then stand up gradually. If your symptoms persist or return, sit back down immediately and lie down with your legs raised higher than the rest of your body.

Clench and unclench your calf muscles and try to sit up again when you feel ready.

If you have milder symptoms, but you are unable to lie flat or sit down, try wriggling your toes, squeezing something tightly or clenching your fists and calf muscles. This should help your symptoms subside.

Friends and family should not attempt to sit you up. They should lie you down on your side until you feel ready to try and sit up.

## **Useful contact numbers**

If you need any further information please contact the Tilt Room at:

Wansbeck General Hospital  
Woodhorn Lane  
Ashington  
Northumberland  
Direct Line: (01670) 529176

Jubilee Day Hospital  
North Tyneside General Hospital  
Rake Lane  
North Shields  
Tyne & Wear  
Direct Line: (0191) 293 2998

You can contact the Tilt Room:  
Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

We cannot always answer the telephone when the clinic is on. Please leave a message and we will contact you as soon as we can.

Sources of Information:  
[www.stars.org.uk](http://www.stars.org.uk)





## **Alternative Formats**

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## **Other sources of information**

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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