



Fainting in women

Fainting is a brief loss of consciousness. It can last from seconds to 30 minutes.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Just before fainting, a person may feel a sense of dread and feel dizzy. She may see spots and have nausea. Her face may turn pale, she could go into a cold sweat, and she could fall over.

If a person falls and can't remember the fall itself, she has fainted.



CAUSES & RISK FACTORS

Fainting is due to a sudden drop in blood flow or glucose supply to the brain. This causes a temporary drop in blood pressure and pulse rate. Medical reasons for this include:

- Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). This is common in early pregnancy. It can also occur in diabetes, in persons on severe diets, etc.
- Anemia.
- Any condition that causes a rapid loss of blood. This can be from internal bleeding, such as with a peptic ulcer, a tubal pregnancy, or a ruptured cyst.
- Heart and circulatory problems.
- Eating disorders.
- Toxic shock syndrome (TSS).
- Seizures. Dehydration.
- Irregular heartbeat or heart beating too fast or too slow.

Other Causes of Fainting

- Any procedure that stretches the cervix, such as having an IUD inserted.
- Extreme pain.
- A sudden change in body position, such as standing up too fast.
- Sudden emotional stress or fright.
- A side effect of some prescription drugs, such as some that lower blood pressure.
- Recreational drugs or excessive alcohol.
- Being in hot, humid weather or a stuffy room.

What to do when someone faints: Dos

- Catch the person before she falls.
- Make sure the person is breathing and has a pulse. If not, call 911 and start CPR.
- Lie the person down with her head below the level of the heart. Raise the legs 8 to 12 inches to promote blood flow to the brain. If the person can't lie down, have her sit down and put her head between her knees.
- Turn the person's head to the side so the tongue doesn't fall back into the throat and to prevent choking on vomit.
- Loosen any tight clothing, but keep the person warm, especially if it is chilly.
- Apply cool moist towels to the person's face and neck.

What to do when someone faints: Don'ts

- Don't slap or shake anyone who's just fainted.
- Don't try to give the person anything to eat or drink, not even water, until she is fully conscious.
- Don't allow the person who has fainted to get up until the sense of physical weakness passes. Then be watchful for a few minutes to be sure she doesn't faint again.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



With fainting, are any signs and symptoms of a heart attack present? (cdc.gov/heartrisk/women)

NO

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE: CALL 911**



With fainting, do stroke signs occur?

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache.

NO

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE: CALL 911**



Is the person not breathing or did fainting occur after a head injury?

NO

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE: CALL 911**



With fainting, do you have severe pain in the pelvis or abdomen, black stools, or blood in the stools or urine?

NO

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



With fainting, does the person have diabetes or is pregnant?

NO

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



Have you fainted more than once?

NO

YES ➔ **SEE DOCTOR**



Are you taking high blood pressure drugs or have you taken a new or increased dose of a prescribed drug?

NO

YES ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE

When Pregnant

- Get out of bed slowly.
- Keep crackers at your bedside and eat a few before getting out of bed.
- Eat small, frequent meals instead of a few large ones. With each meal, have a good source of protein, such as lean meat, low-fat cheese, milk, beans, lentils, tofu, etc. Avoid sweets. Don't skip meals or go for a long time without eating. Drink plenty of fluids.
- Don't sit for long periods of time. Elevate your legs when you sit.
- When you stand, as in a line, move your legs to pump blood up to your heart.
- Take vitamin and mineral supplements, as your doctor prescribes.
- Don't lay on your back during the 2nd and 3rd trimesters of your pregnancy. Lie on your left side. When you can't, lie on your right side.