

Vasovagal Syncope

Vasovagal syncope, commonly known as excessive fainting, is a sudden loss of consciousness, usually followed by a rapid recovery. When you faint, your blood pressure drops suddenly. This leads to less blood flow to the brain and a brief period of unconsciousness. It is usually harmless and requires no treatment.

Vasovagal Syncope is fairly common with about a third of all people fainting at some time in their life.

Vasovagal Syncope should not be confused with Cardiac Syncope which is due to a sudden change in heart rate due to an underlying heart condition. This condition is less common.

Diagnosis:

It is important to determine the cause of the syncope so it can be prevented or treated. A tilt table test is designed to confirm diagnosis and type of vasovagal syncope

Cause:

Vasovagal syncope occurs when your nervous system malfunctions due to a trigger. Normally your pulse rate increases to compensate for low blood pressure. In Vasovagal, this does not occur, but instead, heart rate decreases causing worsening symptoms.

Some triggers can include:

- Sight of blood
- Having blood taken
- Standing for long periods
- Severe pain
- After extreme exercise
- Heat exposure
- Dehydration
- Low blood sugar level
- Fear or emotional trauma
- Hyperventilation

Symptoms:

- Pale skin and sweaty
- Feeling hot, cold and clammy
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, nausea and blurred vision
- Brief unconsciousness

Treatment:

Vasovagal syncope can usually be averted by learning to take precautions. For example, if you faint when blood is drawn, it's best you lie down for the procedure.

As a prevention, when you feel you are going to pass out, its best to try and sit or lie down if possible, with either head between your knees or feet elevated.

Isometric exercise on standing, such as leg pumping, leg crossing and clenching fists may prevent or delay the onset of an episode.
Increasing fluid and salt intake is also advisable.

Medication:

Dr Pascoe will discuss this with you after a correct diagnosis is made. If the above measures do not suppress the episodes, different medications can be used.