



Signs & Symptoms

Fainting is a brief loss of consciousness. It can last from seconds to 30 minutes. Just before fainting, a person may feel a sense of dread, feel dizzy, see spots, and have nausea.

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

An **unconscious** person is hard to rouse and can't be made aware of his or her surroundings. The person is unable to move on his or her own.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the cause.

Fainting & Unconsciousness

Causes

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 can occur in diabetics, in early pregnancy, in persons on severe diets, etc.
- Anemia. Eating disorders.
- Conditions which cause rapid loss of blood.
- Abnormal heart rhythm. Heart attack. Stroke.
- Head injury. Heat stroke. Heat exhaustion.

Other things that can lead to feeling faint or fainting include:

- A sudden change in body position like standing up too fast. This is called **postural hypotension**.
- A side effect of some medicines. Drinking too much alcohol.
- Anxiety or sudden emotional stress or fright.
- Being in hot, humid weather or in a stuffy room. Standing a long time in one place.
- Extreme pain.



Get out of bed slowly.

Questions to Ask

Do any of these problems occur?

- The person is not breathing. {**Note:** Give **Rescue Breaths**, and **CPR**, as needed. See at www.HealthyLearn.com.}
- The person is unconscious or is having a hard time breathing.
- Any **heart attack warning sign**. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- **Signs of dehydration**. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- **Signs of shock**. (See at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- The person who fainted had sudden, severe back pain.

NO

Flowchart continued on next page





Fainting & Unconsciousness, Continued

Did fainting occur with any of these conditions?

- A recent head injury.
- **Severe bleeding.** {**Note:** Give first aid for this. See at www.HealthyLearn.com.}
- Severe pain in the abdomen or pelvis.
- Blood in the stools or urine. Black, tarlike, or maroon colored stools.
- Being over 40 years old and this is the first time for fainting.
- A known heart problem. A fast or irregular heartbeat.
- Diabetes and the person does not respond to a glucagon injection or rubbing a sugar source, such as cake frosting paste, inside the mouth.
- Being a young person and the fainting took place during a sports activity.
- Slow, noisy, or unusual breathing.
- Seizure symptoms, such as twitching or jerking, in a person not known to have epilepsy.



Self-Care / First Aid

For Unconsciousness

- Check for a response. (See Step 2 at www.HealthyLearn.com.) **Call 9-1-1!** Give **Rescue Breaths** and **CPR**, (see at www.HealthyLearn.com), or treat for **Shock** (see at www.HealthyLearn.com), as needed.
- Check for a medical alert tag or information. Call the emergency number if there is one. Follow instructions given.
- Don't give the person anything to eat or drink, not even water.

For Fainting

- Catch the person before he or she falls.
- Lie the person down with the head below heart level. Raise the legs 8 to 12 inches to promote blood flow to the brain. If the person can't lie down, have him or her sit down, bend forward, and put the head between the knees.
- Loosen any tight clothing.
- Don't slap or shake a person. Don't give anything to eat or drink.
- Check for a medical alert tag. Respond as needed.

To Reduce the Risk of Fainting

- Follow your doctor's advice to treat any medical problem which may lead to fainting. Take medicines as prescribed. Let the doctor know about any side effects.
- Get up slowly from bed or from a chair.
- Avoid turning your head suddenly.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing around the neck.
- Don't exercise too much when it is hot and humid. Drink a lot of fluids when you exercise.
- Avoid stuffy rooms and hot, humid places. When you can't do this, use a fan.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

For a Low Blood Sugar Reaction

- Have a sugar source, such as: One half cup of fruit juice or regular (not diet) soda; 6 to 7 regular (not sugar free) hard candies; 3 glucose tablets; or 6 to 8 ounces of milk.
- If you don't feel better after 15 minutes, take the same amount of sugar source again. If you don't feel better after the second dose, call your doctor.