



Fainting: How to care for your child

Fainting in children, especially adolescents, is common but shouldn't be ignored. Also called syncope (SIN-kuh-pee) - it is usually not a sign of a dangerous problem. A person faints when there isn't enough blood going to the brain due to a drop in blood pressure. Blood pressure can drop for many reasons: dehydration, a quick change in position, standing or sitting still for too long, or a sudden fear. Often, a person has warning signs (a change in vision, dizziness, nausea, or stomach pain) before passing out.

Staying well-hydrated can help reduce many types of fainting. Children should drink plenty of caffeine-free liquids, such as water, every day. If exercising or playing outside in the heat, electrolyte drinks can also help. Urine should look clear or very pale yellow.

If your child's provider recommended increasing salt in the diet, give your child salty snacks (pretzels, saltine crackers, pickles, soups) twice a day and use more salt on table foods. Do this only with a health care provider's guidance because it might not be safe if a child's blood pressure is borderline or high.

Moving or changing position when standing or sitting for a long time can also help. If your child is dizzy or lightheaded, has changes in vision, or looks pale, have them lay flat on their back with their feet elevated to increase blood flow to the brain. Have them get up slowly when feeling better. If you see your child beginning to faint, try to catch them and quickly lay them down and lift the legs up.

Ask your provider for a note to allow your child to take bottled water to class and have extra bathroom breaks, if needed. Use the buddy system if your child is doing something where fainting could be more dangerous (such as bike riding, swimming, etc.).

Contact your provider if your child has more fainting spells after following recommendations. Get immediate attention if your child faints during exercise, after feeling a change in the heartbeat or having chest pain, or if he/she faints and is injured by the fall, or has a seizure after fainting.

Source: The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth®

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