



Syncope Discharge Advice (Vasovagal/Reflex Syncope)

Your Care Provider in the Emergency Department today has diagnosed your symptoms as vasovagal or reflex syncope. They are happy that you are safe to be discharged home. You may have also been referred for further investigations.

What is syncope?

Syncope (also known as fainting or passing out) is a sudden, temporary, loss of consciousness followed by a rapid and complete recovery. Occasionally people may have some brief shaking or be incontinent of urine. Feeling lightheaded or dizzy without loss of consciousness is known as presyncope.

What causes syncope?

Syncope is caused by a reduction in blood supply to the brain. This can be because of a drop in blood pressure or a slow heart rate.

In many patients syncope is triggered by simple things such as standing for long periods, or emotional stress such as the sight of blood or needles.

Syncope is very common. Approximately 1 in 3 people will have a syncopal episode at some time in their lives.

What can I do if I feel symptoms coming on?

- Immediately you feel symptoms coming on, sit down, squat, or better still, lie down flat and put your legs in the air (against a wall or chair, or propped up on a pillow)
- Cross your ankles and tense your calf muscles and buttocks tightly.
- Once your symptoms have passed, slowly sit up and then gradually get up
- Keep up a good intake of fluids, especially in warm weather as dehydration can make syncope more likely. Current recommendations suggest a fluid intake of 2 to 3 litres daily.

When should I return to the Emergency Department?

The type of syncope you have been diagnosed with is not serious or life threatening and it is unlikely that you will need immediate medical attention following an episode. However, it is important to return to the Emergency Department if you experience collapse or syncope associated with any of the following:

- Exertion or effort
- When lying down
- Headache, chest pain, palpitations or shortness of breath

Further Information

www.stars.org.uk

