Fainting and Counterpressure Exercises

Fainting in Teens and Young Adults

Fainting, also known as syncope, can be a frightening experience and may cause you to hit your head. Fainting can happen for many reasons including:

- Not drinking enough liquids
- Standing still for a long time
- Overheating
- Strong emotions in response to pain
- Breathing too fast

Most teens who faint recover quickly and don't have lasting side effects. Any time you faint, it's important to tell your primary care team.

Signs and Symptoms

Usually about 5-10 seconds before you pass out, you may have 1 or more of these symptoms:

- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Blurry vision
- Ringing in the ears
- Pale skin
- Faster heart rate
- Sudden warm or cold feeling

How can I prevent a fainting spell?

If you are worried about fainting, talk with your primary care team. Some things that may help include:

- Staying hydrated and eating well
- Avoiding hot weather or taking breaks when outside
- Moving regularly and slow transitions
- Counterpressure exercises

Counterpressure Exercises

Counterpressure exercises are one way to help prevent fainting. These exercises will help boost your blood pressure and increase blood flow to the heart and brain. You should practice these body exercises when you don't have symptoms, so you know how to use them when you start to feel dizzy or lightheaded.

Hand Squeeze



- Take a ball you can squeeze and hold it in the hand you write with.
- Squeeze the ball for as long as you can or until you no longer feel like you are going to faint.

Arm-Tensing (arm-pull)



- Start by laying one hand on top of the other with both hands even with the floor.
- Bring your hands together above your belly button, locking fingers together. Firmly pull your fingers outwards without letting your hands come apart.
- Stay in this position for as long as you can or until you no longer feel like you are going to faint.

Leg-Crossing



- Standing with your feet shoulder width apart and cross one leg over the other.
- Be careful to make sure both feet are securely planted on the ground.
- Squeeze the muscles in your legs, stomach, and bottom for as long as you can or until you no longer feel like you are going to faint.
- You can also do this while lying down.

Elevate Your Legs



- Find a safe flat surface like a couch, bed, or floor and lay flat on your back.
- If you are on a couch or bed, lay with your legs bent and your feet flat.
- If you are on the floor, lay near a wall and position your feet so the bottoms of your feet are flat against the wall.

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