

Syncope / Fainting

Your health and safety are very important to us. Because of the large number of people with the flu, hospitals and emergency rooms are very busy. As a result, we are closely evaluating who we can take in the ambulance to the hospital.

We have evaluated that you do not need to go in the ambulance to the hospital at this time. Paramedics are giving you this sheet to help you care for yourself at home.

You can get medical care at a clinic, an urgent care center or an emergency room. If you decide to do so, you will need to get to these places on your own. Remember hospitals are seeing a lot of patients with the flu. If you go to a hospital you risk getting infected with the flu.

What is Syncope?

It is when you have a brief loss of consciousness. It often happens because your blood pressure dropped too low, then your brain did not get enough oxygen-rich blood. Your body responds by losing consciousness briefly. You also slump or fall down. This problem is called **syncope**, fainting, or a blackout.

Warning Signs

Syncope happens suddenly. But you may have warning signs first, including dimmed vision, lightheadedness, or a rapid heartbeat. Or you may have no warning signs at all. After syncope, you recover quickly. But you may feel tired.

Is It Serious?

Syncope is a common problem with many possible causes. Often these causes are not serious. But some causes are dangerous. Paramedics are trained in identifying most serious causes of syncope as long as the cause is still present. Some common causes of syncope that are not necessarily serious include:

- Standing too long
- Sitting up or standing up too quickly
- Dehydration
- Alcohol consumption
- Strong feelings, such as anxiety or fear

There are, however, serious causes to syncope, such as:

- Internal bleeding
- Heart related problems such a rate issue, valve issue, or heart damage from a heart attack
- Stroke problems

Call 911 back immediately if you develop:

- **The return of symptoms of syncope**
- **Any shortness of breath**
- **A headache**
- **Any chest pain, pressure or discomfort**
- **Weakness on one side of your body**
- **Vomiting with blood in it, coffee ground like vomit, or pass blood or dark tarry stool from your rectum**

While waiting for the ambulance you should:

- **Avoid standing or walking unless necessary.**
- **Get up slowly if you must get up. If you note any symptoms listed in the warning signs section such as dimmed vision, lightheadedness, or a rapid heartbeat, you should sit or lay down.**

This information is to help you care for a person who has had a syncopal event.

The evaluation and/or treatment by the paramedics today are not to replace the recommendation of a doctor.

You can get medical care by a doctor on your own.

You should call 911 for any medical symptom, concerns that happen after we leave today.



These Home Care Instructions are for use during specified times of severe pandemic influenza, courtesy of the Metro Region EMS System, Metro Emergency Services Board, 2099 W. University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55014-3431