

# Dizziness and fainting

Respiratory Physiology

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Information for Patients

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**Confirmed diagnosis (if applicable):** -----

**Date of tilt table test:** -----

## Introduction

A fall in blood pressure and sometimes heart rate, can cause a fall in the blood supply to your brain. If this gets very low it can cause dizziness, disturbances to your vision, or cause you to blackout (faint).

Your doctor might recommend a tilt table test if you have repeated, unexplained episodes of light-headedness, dizziness or fainting. The test can help determine if the cause is related to your blood pressure or heart rate.

## What can I do to prevent dizziness and fainting?

There are lots of things you can do yourself to help reduce your symptoms:

1. Keep well hydrated. Make sure you drink 2 to 3 litres of non-caffeinated fluids each day; more if the weather is warm. At least half of this should be taken by lunch time.  
**This can significantly reduce your symptoms.**
2. Drink 2 glasses of water in the morning before getting out of bed, and then enough fluids during the day to keep your pee (urine) clear (not yellow in colour).

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net](mailto:uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net)

3. Limit your caffeine intake to no more than 3 cups per day, this includes coffee, tea, cola drinks and most energy drinks. Caffeinated drinks may increase your need to pee.
4. Monitor your alcohol intake; even in small quantities alcohol can dehydrate your body and increase your symptoms.
5. Eat small, regular meals rather than 1 large meal a day. Blood pressure may lower after large meals. Do not miss breakfast. Equally, it is important to stay nourished.
6. Adding a little salt to your food or eating something salty each day may help to increase your blood pressure over time. This may not be appropriate for certain patients and should only be undertaken on the advice of your doctor.
7. When exercising, drink plenty of water or fluid to keep hydrated before, during and afterwards.
8. If you are unwell for other reasons it is important to increase your fluid intake.
9. Warm and hot environments cause blood vessels to relax and widen which in turn lowers blood pressure. If being in a warm environment is unavoidable, then increase your fluid intake and take precautionary measures. For the same reasons, taking very hot baths or showers can cause your blood pressure to fall.
10. Wear loose layers of clothing and try to keep cool. Avoid tight clothing around the neck e.g. ties and scarves.
11. Wearing support stockings or tights can help blood return to the heart, take them off when going to bed.
12. Avoid standing or sitting for long periods. If unavoidable, clench and release your calf muscles or rock forward on the balls of your feet. Using your calf muscles in this way can encourage blood flow, which in turn increases blood pressure.
13. Sudden changes in posture (e.g. getting up too quickly from a sitting or lying position) can cause a fall in blood pressure, so make sure you take your time.
14. Avoid lifting heavy objects. Straining can slow the heart rate and lower blood pressure.
15. Keep physically active.
16. Sleeping with the head of the bed just slightly raised can help in some cases (e.g. placing 1 house brick under each leg of the bed at the head end). Over time, this can increase your resting blood pressure.

## **What should I do when I feel dizzy or faint?**

- Sit or lie down. If you can, lie down flat and raise your legs against a wall or on a chair so they are slightly higher than your body. This increases blood pressure by increasing blood flow back toward your heart.
- If you can move into a squatting position this can help. This increases blood flow back to your head. However, when getting back up, make sure you get up slowly.

- If you are unable to sit or lie down, tightly tensing muscles in your arms, legs, stomach and buttocks, can increase blood pressure enough to prevent a faint. You do not need to tense all these muscles at the same time, but hold the tension for as long as you are able to. You should not hold your breath whilst doing this. You can do these exercises whilst standing, sitting or lying down.

These can all increase blood returning to the heart and improve blood pressure. The light-headed feeling should go away after a few minutes. Once you feel better, get up slowly and carefully. If you still feel faint you may need to lie down for a few more minutes.

### Keeping a diary of your episodes

If you continue to have any further symptoms, please complete the diary below and bring it with you to your next outpatient clinic appointment.

Date and time	What were you doing beforehand?	What did you feel?	Did you manage to stop the feelings? If so how?	Did you collapse? If so for how long? Did you injure yourself?	Were there witnesses? What did they say happened?	Did you seek any medical attention?



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## Contact details

Respiratory Physiology - 0116 258 3420.



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