

## NEUROCARDIOGENIC SYNCOPE

You have been diagnosed by your physician with neurocardiogenic syncope.

Syncope means a temporary loss of consciousness.

Syncope can have a number of causes but neurocardiogenic syncope is the most common type.

Neurocardiogenic syncope is **not a heart condition**.

Blood vessels tend to expand which leads to pooling of blood in the lower parts of the body. The reduction of blood return triggers a miscommunication between the heart and the brain. As a result the person feels light headed or may faint because not enough blood is getting to the brain. Fainting is helpful in that it restores a person to the flat position getting rid of the pooling effect in the lower parts of the body, allowing more blood to return to the heart and brain.

### Neurocardiogenic syncope may occur:

- After prolonged periods of standing.
- After being in a warm environment (ie: hot summer weather; hot crowded room; hot shower or bath).
- Immediately after exercise.
- After emotionally stressful events (ie: seeing blood, being scared or anxious).
- Some experience symptoms soon after eating when blood flow has shifted to the stomach to aid in digestion.
- After standing up quickly from a lying or seated position.

It is common to experience visual disturbance, abdominal pain, heart palpitations or nausea before fainting. It is common to observe some stiffening or seizure-like activity while one is briefly unconscious.

### Here are some simple things you can do to reduce the likelihood of fainting.

- Avoid standing in one position for long periods of time. Move leg, tap toes, and change positions frequently. Stand with legs crossed.
- Avoid being seated for long periods of time without changing positions.
- Position changes should be gradual (ie: do not jump out of bed; sit on edge of bed and perform a few leg exercises).
- Exercises may include pulling or crossing your legs and squeezing the knees to the chest.
- If you experience any warning symptoms like black spots or dizziness, it is important to get your head down between your legs otherwise you will faint completely.
- Avoid saunas, hot tubs, or lying on a hot beach.
- Take shorter showers and baths and aim for cooler water.
- Increase your fluid intake such as Gatorade, tomato juice, and other sodium containing fluids.
- Increasing salt intake in your diet is also helpful. This should be done by adding salt to healthy foods. Increase ½ gram to 1 gram per day is helpful.
- Increase water intake.
- Continue to be active but have an adequate warm up and cool down before and after activities and increase fluid intake ½ hour before activity,

If you have another fainting episode that is typical of the ones before and you did not sustain an injury, you do **not need** to go to the hospital or call 911.

If the fainting episode occurs during peak activity or the episode is different, you should be reviewed by your physician.