

Topic Page: [Fainting](#)

Definition: **fainting** from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Sudden, temporary loss of consciousness caused by reduced blood supply to the brain. It may be due to emotional shock or physical factors, such as pooling of blood in the legs from standing still for long periods.

Summary Article: **fainting**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

or syncope (sīng'kəpē), temporary loss of consciousness caused by an insufficient supply of oxygen to the brain. It can be concurrent with any serious disease or condition, such as heart failure, hypertension (high blood pressure), arrhythmia, hemorrhage, injury to the brain or other organs, or poisoning. Less serious conditions can also cause fainting, e.g., fatigue, prolonged standing, getting up after long confinement to bed, pain, hunger, dehydration, anemia, or fright or other emotional disturbance. Loss of control of blood pressure can be detected with the tilt test. Such drugs as scopolamine, beta-blockers, and disopyrmyde have been successful in restoring the integrity of the vascular system. Person aware of an oncoming fainting spell should sit down and lower their heads between their knees for a moment or two to increase the flow of oxygen to the brain. The already unconscious person should be placed in a supine position, preferably with the feet raised. If unconsciousness persists, cold water on the face or the inhalation of aromatic spirits of ammonia may be tried. Under no circumstances should any liquid or medication be forced down the throat of an unconscious person. Fainting for more than a few minutes requires medical attention. After regaining consciousness, the patient should remain recumbent for at least 10 minutes and arise gradually.

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fainting. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/fainting>



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