

COUNTER-PRESSURE TECHNIQUES FOR PATIENTS WITH SYNCOPE

What is syncope?

Syncope (pronounced “sin ko pea”) is the brief loss of consciousness and posture caused by a temporary decrease in blood flow to the brain. Syncope may be associated with a sudden fall in blood pressure, a decrease in heart rate or changes in blood volume or distribution. The person usually regains consciousness and becomes alert right away, but may experience a brief period of confusion.

Syncope is often the result of an underlying medical condition that could be related to your heart, nervous system or blood flow to the brain.

If you have syncope, it is important for you and those close to you to know the signs and symptoms of an episode that can lead to fainting. Every patient is different, but common symptoms are feeling light headed, nauseous, and having cold, clammy skin. If you feel these symptoms, try counter-pressure techniques to prevent fainting. You should practice these exercises even when you do not have symptoms of syncope so you are familiar with each technique.



Handgrip

Hold a rubber ball in the hand you use to write. Squeeze the ball for as long as you can or until your symptoms disappear.



Arm-Tensing

Grip one hand with the other and pull them against each other without letting go. Hold this grip as long as you can or until your symptoms disappear.



Leg-Crossing

Cross one leg over the other and squeeze the muscles in your legs, abdomen and buttocks. Hold this position as long as you can or until your symptoms disappear.

Syncope research

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and other institutes of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) conduct research related to syncope in laboratories at the NIH. The organizations support additional research through grants to major medical institutions across the country. Much of this research focuses on finding better ways to prevent and treat syncope.

Organization information

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Reference: van Dijk N, Quartieri F, Blanc JJ, et al. Effectiveness of Physical Counterpressure Maneuvers in Preventing Vasovagal Syncope. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2006 Oct 17;48(8):1652-7. Epub 2006 Sep 26.

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider for advice about a specific medical condition.



**CENTER FOR SYNCOPE
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