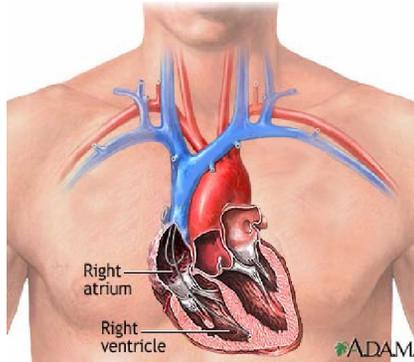


# Vasovagal Syncope



## What is it?

Syncope is a medical term for fainting or blackouts. There are many causes of blackouts. The most common type is called vasovagal syncope. Most episodes occur while standing and occasionally while sitting but it almost never occurs when lying down. Many people describe feeling very warm and sweaty before blacking out.

Vasovagal syncope is not a serious or life threatening condition. It happens as a result of a drop in blood pressure leading to decreased blood flow to the brain causing dizziness or fainting. It can be serious on the rare occasion if it happens to you while driving!

Other causes of blackouts include an abnormal heart rhythm, either too fast or too slow, and seizures.

## Tests We Do

An echocardiogram (heart ultrasound) is often performed to assess the structure of the heart. Tilt testing is sometimes performed to try to reproduce an episode of vasovagal syncope. While the blood pressure and heart rate are monitored, the patient is tilted up to 80 degrees (almost standing) to try to trigger an episode. This test, if positive, may make you feel light headed or nauseated.

Another test involves having you wear a 24 or 48 hour Holter monitor. This is a small tape recorder that you would wear with a strap on your waist to record your heart beats. Longer term monitoring is used to look for infrequent rhythm problems in select patients with a loop recorder.

## Treatment

The most important treatment for vasovagal syncope is simply a change in lifestyle and most patients are significantly improved. These measures include drinking more fluids, eating more salt, avoiding those things that trigger attacks and isometric exercise, and tilt training. A number of medications can be tried but they often cause intolerable side effects or may not work. Very rarely are pacemakers required.

Other causes of blackouts are treated depending on the discovered cause.

## Risks

There is very little risk involved in a tilt test. You are carefully monitored and have highly qualified doctors and nurses at your side at all times.

## FAQ's

1. What doctor will I see about my blackouts?

The doctors work as a team and as a result, any one of Drs Klein, Yee, Krahn, Skanes or Gula could be in the clinic or performing the testing.

2. What about driving / work?

The answer to this question is very dependent on the number and circumstances of your blackouts, and the nature of your driving or job. Finding and treating the cause is very important to resuming normal activities including driving. Remember to discuss this with your doctor to keep yourself and the public safe.

For a complete list of questions and answers, please go to:

[www.londoncardiac.ca](http://www.londoncardiac.ca)

click on the button "Patient Info", then "FAQ's".