

Fainting Related to Vaccination:

What You Need to Know

What is Fainting?

Fainting (the medical term is “syncope”) is when a person loses consciousness (passes out) briefly after a sudden, temporary, change in blood flow to the brain. A person who is about to faint may feel lightheaded, dizzy, weak, nauseated, sweaty or cold. They may feel flushed or have a change in vision.

When people faint, their muscles may twitch, and this may be mistaken for a seizure. However, they usually wake up quickly after fainting. The reason fainting is important is that people who faint may be injured if they fall. Fainting is more common in people who are very afraid of needles.

You Can Reduce the Risk of Vaccination-Related Fainting

The basics:

- Before the visit, eat or drink if needed. If you are very hungry or thirsty you may be more likely to feel faint when vaccinated.
- Let the person giving the vaccination know if you have a history of dizziness or fainting related to vaccination or injections. Also, let them know what helps you.
- Sit or lie down for the vaccinations and stay for about 15 minutes after vaccination is complete.
- If you are the parent or companion of the vaccine recipient, be supportive. Avoid using scary words, but don't give false comfort either (“You won't feel a thing.”).¹

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Adolescents and young adults are most likely to faint after vaccination, but it can occur at any age. Fainting is a reaction to getting an injection. It is not caused by any specific vaccine ingredient and is not a reason to avoid any future vaccination. Some people have a pattern of fainting related to injections, especially if anxious.



What if You Feel Faint During the Vaccination?

If you start to feel faint, sit or lie down if you can. If you faint, the healthcare provider will support you. You should feel better in a few minutes.

1. *Improving the Vaccination Experience: What Parents and Caregivers Can Say from AboutKidsHealth (Canada)* at assets.aboutkidshealth.ca/AKHAssets/CARD)Parents_WhatYouCanSay.pdf?hub=cardcommvac#card

2. Example of a muscle tension exercise: Sit in a chair. For about 10 to 15 seconds, tense/squeeze the leg and stomach muscles, but not the arm where the needle will go. Release the tension for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat the tense and release steps until the feeling of faintness passes. *From: Needle Related Fainting: Why Does It Happen? What to Do About it?* from AboutKidsHealth (Canada) at assets.aboutkidshealth.ca/AKHAssets/CARD_Muscle_Tension.PDF?hub=cardcommvac#card

