

Hi Everybody,

I wanted to give you all an explanation about what happened to one of our members at our recent concert and others who have gotten lightheaded or fainted during a concert.

When we are in the situation where we stand in one spot for a while in a warm environment, the blood vessels in our legs dilate (become larger) and blood tends to pool in our legs. When this happens, it is hard for blood to get back to the heart to be pumped out to the brain and the rest of the body. It is the movement of the muscles in our legs that squeeze blood vessels thereby propelling blood back to the heart. When the brain does not get enough blood/oxygen, we become lightheaded, feel dizzy, sometimes nauseated, and may faint (pass out) which in the medical world is called syncope ("sing co pee").

To compound that issue, if we have not had enough non-caffeinated drinks that day and so are a little dehydrated, or took a diuretic that causes us to lose fluid, or another blood pressure medication that dilates (enlarges) our blood vessels, feel warm, (as in the summer or are too warmly dressed), all of these contribute to the problem of passing out. A warm environment dilates (enlarges) the veins and causes more blood to stay in the legs (via gravity) while dehydration causes there to be less blood in the blood vessels. The result is that there is less blood in circulation in general.

If this ever happens to you, sit down or lie down if you can, take slow deep breaths and flex your ankles. If you are standing, raise up and down on your toes. If you are sitting, just point your toes and then bring them back towards your body rhythmically. These two maneuvers help blood to get back to the heart. This ankle flexing contracts the leg muscles and gets blood back to the heart and ultimately the brain. Deep breathing causes a "sucking" action in the chest that helps to pull blood back to the heart faster.

Sitting down is good but lying down is even better, and elevating your legs a little is even better in getting blood in the legs back to the heart.

This syndrome is called a "postural hypotension", "orthostatic hypotension" or a "vasovagal response" and is by far the most common reason for fainting. It is common in the summer and can especially happen in churches when members take their medications in the morning, don't drink much before church, and then stand for a while.

So, in these situations, be sure and move your legs a lot, pump your ankles (rise up on your toes rhythmically when you are standing). Sit down if you feel faint and let the person close by know you don't feel well. If you don't feel better, lie down in the pew. That will get a lot of attention and help, trust me!

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions. (262-483-8833) Linda Menzel