**Civil Air Patrol health & wellness brief: Fainting (Syncope)**

**Fainting**is a sudden and temporary loss of consciousness, usually due to loss of oxygen (hypoxia) to the brain.

The brain needs a steady supply of oxygen, which is transported by the blood system. If that supply of blood is suddenly decreased, the brain does not get the oxygen it needs, and the person may lose consciousness and faint. For example, if a person stands up suddenly, blood may not be shunted to the brain fast enough to meet the brain’s needs for oxygen, resulting in fainting.

**There are many causes of fainting**, such as low blood sugar, low blood pressure, rapid and deep breathing, emotional distress or severe pain, or standing in formation when it is very warm for long periods of time.

**Symptoms of fainting** are lightheadness, feeling weak, sweaty, or nauseous, skin color turns pale, and vision may fade (tunnel vision).

**What to do with a fainted person?**

* If the person just has symptoms (i.e. “I feel faint”), have him sit in a chair and put his head between his knees or lie on the floor until the symptoms pass.
* If you find a person who has fallen, survey the area (for safety) before you approach. Put the person on his back and check for breathing and pulse. If no breathing, perform rescue breathing or advance to CPR if no pulse and have someone call 911.

* If the person is breathing, loosen the clothing around the neck, elevate the legs 10” to 12” above heart level, and monitor him for breathing and wakefulness.
* If the person starts to vomit, turn him on his side in the recovery position.
* Stay with the person until he recovers which should be 1-2 minutes. After 10-15 minutes, have him get up very slowly.

**When should you obtain medical help?** If he does not return to consciousness within 1-2 minutes, has reoccurring episodes of fainting, is diabetic, or has chest pain.

**Bottom line** **–** Someday you will need to help someone who has fainted, so remember what to do. **And if you do not know CPR, learn.**