



Geriatric Fast Facts

Topic: Syncope in the Elderly

What: *Syncope* is defined as a **transient loss of consciousness**, usually accompanied by falling, with spontaneous recovery.

Why: “Syncope results from inadequate delivery of oxygen or metabolic substrate to the brain or from disorganized electrical activity in the brain (seizures)”⁽¹⁾. Syncope in the elderly is often **multi-factorial** and difficult to diagnose*. It’s often a result of **several interacting abnormalities** rather than from one single disease.

*As many as 40 % of syncopal episodes are **unexplained**.

Common Causes of Presyncope/Syncope in the Elderly



Cardiovascular System	Cardiac Arrhythmias, Vasovagal Events, Venous Insufficiency, Hypotension, Hypertension, Aortic Stenosis, Acute/Chronic Diseases such as Diabetes, CHF, Asthma, Pulmonary Embolism
Central Nervous System	<i>Stroke, Seizure, Vertobasilar Insufficiency, Vertigo, Parkinson’s Disease, Hydrocephalus</i>
Medication	<i>Effects of medication such diuretics, psychotropics, sedatives, vasodilators and anti-hypertensives</i>
Other	Acute/chronic diseases causing weakness such as Arthritis, Sensory Deficits, Dehydration and Psychiatric Illness