

POSTURAL ORTHOSTATIC TACHYCARDIA SYNDROME (POTS)

What is POTS?^{2,4,6}

Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) is a condition that affects how the body handles standing up. POTS is a type of dysautonomia, which means it affects the autonomic nervous system (the system that controls automatic body functions like heart rate and blood pressure). When a person with POTS stands up, their heart beats much faster than normal. This can cause symptoms like dizziness, headaches, tiredness, and trouble thinking clearly. POTS happens because the body system that controls things like heart rate and blood pressure does not adjust the right way when moving from sitting or lying down to standing.

Symptoms^{2,4}

- Trouble standing for a long time
- Fast heart rate
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Headaches
- Feeling very tired
- Anxiety
- Fainting (passing out)
- Trouble with focus, memory, and thinking clearly ("brain fog")

Prevalence & Statistics^{2,7}

- It is hard to know exactly how many children have POTS because symptoms can be different for each person
- One study found that about 6.8% of children may have it
- Most people are diagnosed around age 15
- Symptoms often start around age 13
- About 80% of people with POTS are female

Treatment^{4,6}

There is no single cure, but symptoms can be managed. Common treatments include: drinking more water, eating more salt (if a doctor says it is okay), exercising that gradually increases over time, wearing compression clothing, and medicines (such as beta blockers or other drugs).

Myth #1

POTS is "just anxiety."

- Some symptoms of POTS (like a fast heart rate or dizziness) can feel like anxiety, but POTS is a physical condition.²
- However, people with POTS may feel anxious because they worry about fainting or getting sick in public.

Myth #2

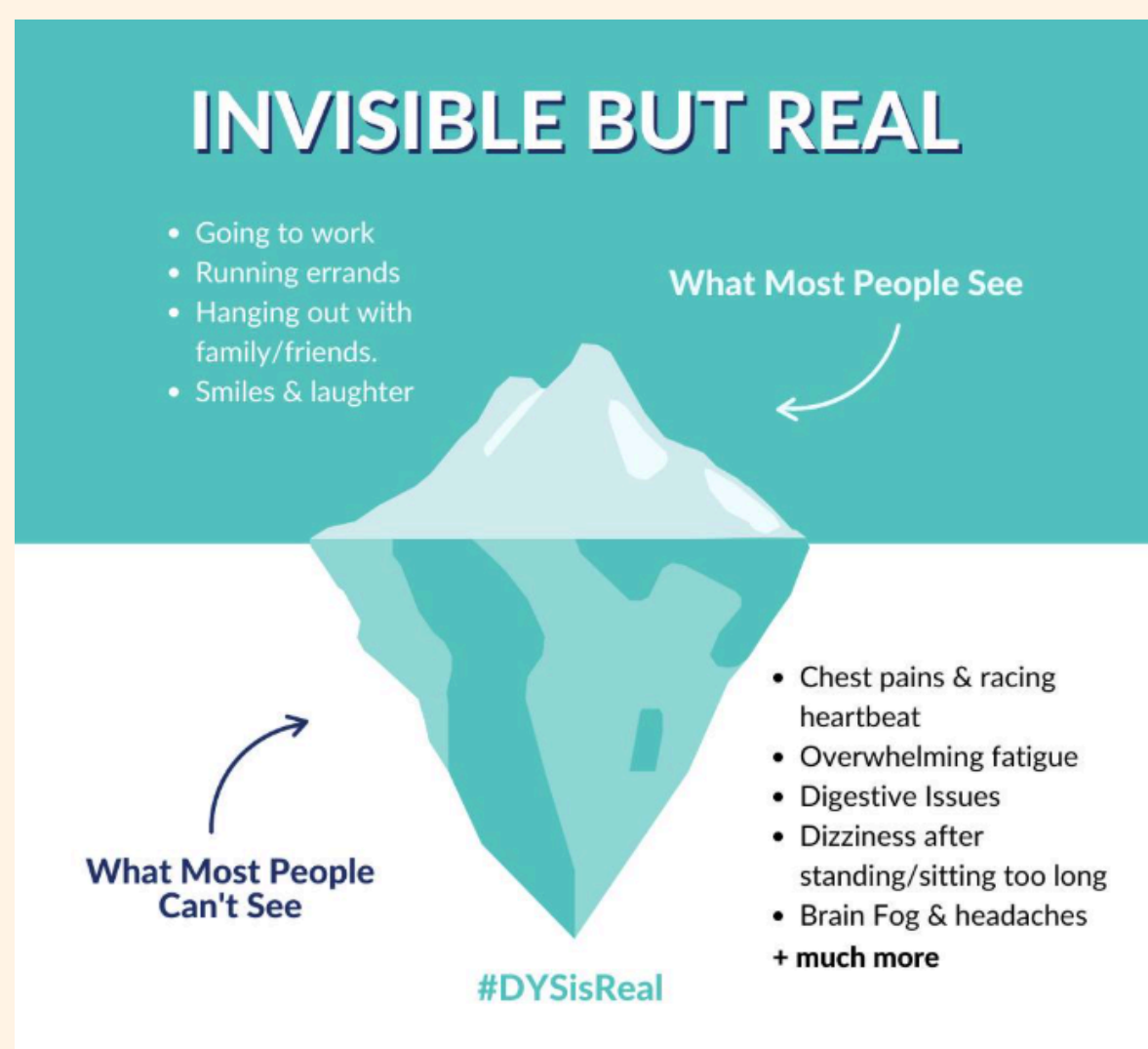
Everyone with POTS faints.

- Not everyone who has POTS faints.⁵
- Only about 20–30% of people with POTS faint. Many people with POTS never faint at all.¹



What other conditions can happen with POTS?³

- Anxiety and Depression
- Chronic fatigue (long-term tiredness)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- Migraines (bad headaches)
- Fibromyalgia (body pain)
- Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (very flexible joints)
- Mast Cell Activation Syndrome



Resources

Dysautonomia Support Network

Dysautonomia International

Standing Up to POTS

What can I do?

Here are some things you can do as a teacher/school staff member to support your student with POTS.

- Let the student sit when needed and avoid long periods of standing
- Seat the student near a wall or door for support
- Allow a water bottle and salty snacks if recommended
- Give extra time when standing up and allow slower transitions
- Break work into smaller steps
- Give both written and spoken directions
- Allow extra time on tests if needed
- Be flexible with deadlines during symptom flare-ups
- Create a signal if the student feels faint
- Allow the student to go to the nurse without drawing attention
- Provide a safe place to lie down if needed
- Adjust PE activities (avoid long endurance activities, allow seated options)
- Stay in touch with caregivers about diet and needs

References

¹Arnold AC, Ng J, Raj SR. Postural tachycardia syndrome - Diagnosis, physiology, and prognosis. *Auton Neurosci*. 2018;215:3-11. doi:10.1016/j.autneu.2018.02.005

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⁴Chen G, Du J, Jin H, Huang Y. Postural Tachycardia Syndrome in Children and Adolescents: Pathophysiology and Clinical Management. *Front Pediatr*. 2020;8:474. Published 2020 Aug 20. doi:10.3389/fped.2020.00474

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⁶Raj SR, Fedorowski A, Sheldon RS. Diagnosis and management of postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. *CMAJ*. 2022;194(10):E378-E385. doi:10.1503/cmaj.211373

⁷Lin J, Han Z, Li X, et al. Risk factors for postural tachycardia syndrome in children and adolescents. *PLoS One*. 2014;9(12):e113625. Published 2014 Dec 4. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0113625

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