

Orthostatic Intolerance and Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Self-Care Checklist

1. Identify and avoid your triggers

- a. Physical triggers:
 - Extreme temperatures, hot showers/baths.
 - Standing up quickly or standing still for long periods.
 - Lifting objects over 10–15 pounds or holding arms up for an extended time.
 - Climbing long flights of stairs.
- b. Food/beverage triggers:
 - Getting dehydrated.
 - Caffeine (especially energy drinks).
 - Extra-large meals, especially high carbohydrate or sugar meals.
 - Alcohol.
 - Foods high in gluten or other allergens.
- c. Psychological triggers:
 - Stress at home or work; (note that POTS is not just anxiety and is not caused by anxiety).

2. Learn short-term 'countermeasures' to control acute onset of symptoms

- a. General:
 - Fidget! Pump your ankles, then tense and release your thighs, then your buttocks; squeeze a ball to pump your arms.
 - Deep belly breaths help circulation. Inhale against resistance (like sucking in air through a straw). Cough.
 - "Bolus water": drink 1 pint (500 cc) of water (no electrolytes) in 5 minutes.
 - Cool your skin with a water mister or cold wet cloth on your face. Finish showers with cool water.
- b. Standing:
 - Cross and squeeze legs and buttocks. Squat. Do calf raises. Fidget. Stand with one leg on a chair.
 - Bend slightly forward from the waist (such as leaning over a shopping cart).
- c. Sitting:
 - Sit with feet propped/elevated or knees tucked to your chest.
 - Lean forward with hands on the knees.
- d. Lying down:
 - Lie down with feet propped up on a chair or up against a wall; pumping your feet helps even more. Try not to lie still for more than 30 minutes, as this can make POTS symptoms worse.

3. Implement long term prevention/self-care

- a. Food/beverage strategies
 - Drink lots of fluid and electrolytes (100 ounces, or 3L, per day). Avoid sugary drinks.
 - Eat lots of salt (3-15 grams or ½-3 tsp per day) and/or use an electrolyte supplement. E.g.: Propel, Liquid IV, Nuun, Drip Drop, Normalyte, Pedalyte, SaltStick are examples. Some have sugar, others have artificial sweetener, so find what works best for you.
 - Eat small, frequent meals (with salt); avoid high sugar/carbohydrate foods.
- b. Physical strategies
 - Get up and move around frequently throughout your day. This decreases blood pooling.
 - Practice deep, diaphragmatic breathing at least once a day, preferably more often.
 - Use compression stockings (20-40 mmHg, waist high works better than knee high) or an abdominal binder. (CWX, Old Navy, Jobst, Rejuva Health have appropriate stockings). Compression shorts are also helpful.
 - Participate in an appropriate exercise program. Some people need to start lying down with leg and core strengthening, then progress to recumbent exercise (i.e.: recumbent bike, swimming, rowing machine, sitting stepper machines). Progress gradually, but try to do some exercise daily. Don't miss 2 days in a row.
 - Place 6" blocks under the head of your bed; this helps you retain fluid overnight.
- c. Psychological strategies
 - Relaxation practice through diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, biofeedback, etc.