



# DIZZINESS, LIGHTHEADEDNESS, AND RACING HEART AFTER COVID-19? IT COULD BE DYSAUTONOMIA

LONG COVID ESSENTIALS: A SERIES BY The Sick Times × LONG COVID JUSTICE

Many people with Long COVID develop a condition called **dysautonomia**, in which your [autonomic functions](#) (or things your body does by itself, like heart beating) are disturbed. There are many kinds of dysautonomia; one form seen commonly in Long COVID is called [POTS](#), or “postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome.”

POTS symptoms often include:

- Racing heart
- Dizziness, or feeling like you might faint
- Headache
- “Brain fog” or trouble thinking clearly
- Chest pain

POTS can happen when your body doesn’t respond well to changing positions. The automatic bodily functions that are supposed to keep your circulation working properly aren’t quite doing their job, and your heart beats extra hard to try to make up for it.

Cardiologists or neurologists usually diagnose POTS using an [active standing](#) or [NASA Lean test](#). These tests monitor what happens when you change position, to see if your heart beats too fast. This is best done by a professional to rule out other issues and ensure you don’t faint. If you don’t have a provider, find a friend (for safety) to help you [do an at-home test](#).

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There are some things you can do at home to help manage POTS:

- *Move slowly, lie down where possible.* [Transition](#) from sitting to standing slowly and gradually.
- *Get lots of water and salts.* This will help your body maintain a reasonable blood volume.
- *Compression garments gently squeeze your blood vessels, to help with circulation.*
- *Try sleeping with your head slightly elevated.*
- *Eat smaller meals throughout the day.*
- *Avoid the heat.* Hot weather can make symptoms like [heat intolerance worse](#).

Some will find they need additional relief. If so, doctors have used medication to help POTS patients, even though there are no medications officially approved for it in the US. You may want to ask your doctor about:

- Beta blockers, which slow the heart rate
- Fludrocortisone, which helps your body hang on to fluids
- Midodrine, clonidine and pyridostigmine, which can help rebalance your autonomic nervous system in different ways

## \* RESOURCES

- The patient-led organization Dysautonomia International [offers educational resources and more](#)
- Long COVID Physio has a helpful [video and resources on dysautonomia and POTS](#)
- POTS UK has an [informative booklet on managing symptoms](#)
- The Canadian Cardiovascular Society has published a [proposed treatment algorithm](#)
- Hot weather can worsen POTS and Long COVID symptoms. Learn more in [this feature from The Sick Times](#)

\* **FULL SERIES OF FACTSHEETS WITH LINKED RESOURCES + MORE:**  
[tiny.cc/LCE](https://tiny.cc/LCE) or scan the QR code with your phone camera

\* **QUESTIONS?** [connect@s4hi.org](mailto:connect@s4hi.org)



*This series was designed by people living with Long COVID and associated diseases. Each resource sheet has been reviewed by patient and medical experts. This is an informational resource, not medical advice. Publication date: 9/16/2024.*