

Managing Dysautonomia

Created by **Vitassium**



What is dysautonomia?

Dysautonomia is a medical term that represents a malfunction of the autonomic nervous system. This system controls the “automatic” functions of the body that we do not consciously think about, such as heart rate, blood pressure, digestion, dilation and constriction of the pupils of the eye, kidney function and temperature control. There are several forms of dysautonomia, including POTS, as well as Neurocardiogenic Syncope (Vasovagal Syncope), Inappropriate Sinus Tachycardia (IST) and Multiple System Atrophy.

I was just diagnosed with dysautonomia — now what?

- **Research** your condition
- Advocate for yourself by making sure you have a doctor who understands your condition and by asking questions
- There is no cure for most forms of dysautonomia, but there are lifestyle adjustments and medication that can help manage symptoms. There is not a “one size fits all” treatment and there may be some trial and error until you and your medical provider find what works for you.
- Try to identify triggers, like sitting or standing for long periods of time, heat or certain foods
- Connect with the community through support groups and social media
- Get a blood pressure monitor and pulse oximeter to track your blood pressure and heart rate
- Get a medical ID bracelet, especially if you’re prone to fainting
- Always carry essentials with you like fluids and salt pills or salty snacks

Tips for symptom management

General

- Wear compression garments like socks and leggings to help blood circulation
- Use mobility aids if you find it difficult to stand or walk long distances
- Always sit up and stand up slowly
- Do counter maneuvers before and while standing to help prevent syncope
- Put your legs up on the wall to help decrease your heart rate
- Sit down as often as possible, like while cooking, cleaning or doing your hair
- Avoid bending over — instead, bend at your knees or use a grabber tool to pick up small objects.

Food and Drink

- Increase your fluid and salt intake to boost blood volume — this may be done through IV fluid, or products like Vitassium, which is specifically designed to provide electrolytes to people with dysautonomia and other chronic conditions.
- Eat small, frequent meals instead of large meals, which can worsen symptoms
- Keep a food diary — some patients find that they feel better when avoiding simple carbohydrates, gluten, dairy and/or caffeine, while other patients find caffeine helps their symptoms.
- Avoid alcohol, which can cause dehydration and hypotension

Showering

- Shower in warm or cool water as opposed to hot or cold water
- Use a shower chair
- When washing your hair, flip your head upside down so blood doesn’t pool in your arms
- Shower before bed if it causes fatigue
- Use dry shampoo and shower wipes to extend the amount of time between showers

Mornings

- Sleep at a 30-degree angle
- Before you get out of bed:
 - Hydrate
 - Take your medications and salt pills
 - Put on compression socks
 - Elevate your feet
 - Do counter maneuvers
 - Get up slowly
 - Practice sitting and standing several times