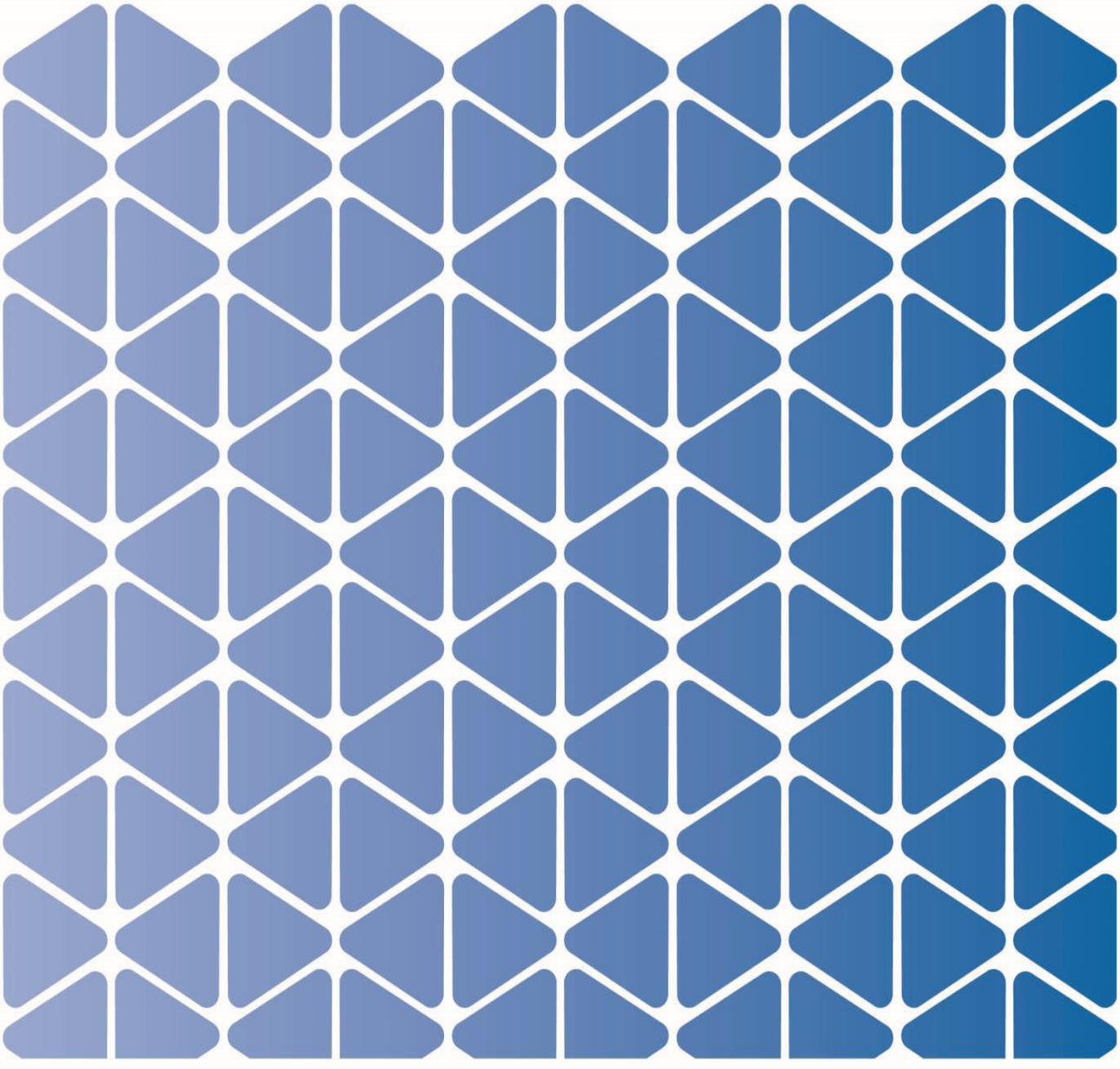
NHS
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

Postural Tachycardia Syndrome (PoTS) – Information for Patients (UK)



What is PoTS?

Postural Tachycardia Syndrome (PoTS) is a condition that affects the autonomic nervous system, which controls bodily functions that we do not consciously think about (e.g., heart rate and blood pressure). In PoTS, there is an abnormally fast heart rate when moving from a lying or sitting position to standing. This can cause various symptoms like dizziness, fainting, palpitation, and fatigue. Not everyone with PoTS will experience all of these, and the symptoms can vary in severity.

PoTS is more commonly seen in young adults, especially women, and can develop after a viral illness, trauma, or surgery. Some people with conditions like Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome may also be more prone to developing PoTS.

For more information, you can watch an excellent introductory video on PoTS here: YouTube: PoTS SyndromeExplained.

Symptoms of PoTS

- **Rapid increase in heart rate, especially on standing**:
- **Dizziness and lightheadedness**: You may feel like you're going to faint, especially when you stand up quickly.
- **Palpitation**: Feeling your heart pounding or racing.
- **Fatigue**: Persistent tiredness and low energy.
- **Fainting (syncope)**: Some patients may experience full fainting episodes.
- **Exercise intolerance**: Difficulty performing physical activities.
- **Other symptoms**: Nausea, brain fog (difficulty concentrating), headaches, and sweating.
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The symptoms above are not an exhaustive list and patients report many different combinations in varying severity. For more details on the symptoms and causes of PoTS, visit the NHS PoTS page.

Diagnosis

PoTS is typically diagnosed based on your symptoms and clinical examination, including standing you up in clinic for 10 minutes to assess your heart rate and blood pressure response to change in posture. PoTS

In most cases, no further tests are required to diagnose PoTS. In some cases, a tilt test (where your heart rate and blood pressure are monitored as you move from lying down

to a standing position can be helpful. Heart rate monitors are rarely necessary. Routine bloods tests can be useful to rule out other conditions

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Management of PoTS

Most patients with PoTS do not need any specific treatment: the majority of patients can control their symptoms well with simple modifications to their lifestyle. It is worth persisting with these general recommendations as medications for PoTS are not usually very effective, and frequently carry unpleasant side effects.

Lifestyle Modifications

- **Increase fluid and salt intake**: Drink 2-3 litres of water daily, and increase your salt intake (6-10 grams per day, as recommended by your doctor) to help increase blood volume and reduce symptoms.
- **Compression garments**: Wearing compression stockings or an abdominal binder can help reduce dizziness by preventing blood pooling in the legs.
- **Exercise**: Gradual, regular exercise can help strengthen the cardiovascular system. Start with recumbent activities like cycling or rowing and slowly transition to more upright exercises.
- **Avoid prolonged standing**: Minimize standing for long periods, and when standing, move your legs frequently to improve circulation.
- **Elevate the head of your bed**: Sleeping with the head of your bed raised can help reduce morning symptoms by maintaining blood pressure and blood volume.
- **Stop smoking**

Dietary Adjustments

- **Smaller, frequent meals**: Large meals can make symptoms worse. Smaller meals spread throughout the day can help regulate blood flow.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol**: Both can make symptoms worse by affecting heart rate and blood pressure

Coping Strategies and Symptom Management

- **Postural changes**: When transitioning from sitting or lying to standing, do so slowly to allow your body to adjust.
- **Cooling measures**: Avoid overheating. Stay cool by using fans, wearing light clothing, or applying cooling packs.
- **Isometric Exercises**: static exercise (like rocking on tiptoes or clenching muscles) before and after standing to improve venous return.

For more detailed guidance, refer to the
NHS:Postural Tachycardia Syndrome (PoTS)

Mental Health and Emotional Support

Living with a chronic condition like PoTS can be emotionally challenging. Managing stress is important as stress can worsen symptoms. Techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, and breathing exercises can be helpful.

Medications
Occasionally, medications can be used to help control some of the symptoms of PoTS. Generally, medications will only help with the palpitation and light headedness, but will not help with symptom such as fatigue. Options include beta-blockers or Ivabradine (medications that slows the heart), or a medicine called Midodrine which can raise blood pressure

Always discuss your medication options with your GP or specialist.

UK-Based Support Groups:

- **PoTS UK**: Provides comprehensive resources, support, and links to specialist clinics across the UK. They also have patient stories and practical advice for managing life with PoTS.

Further Information and Resources

For more detailed information and support, you can visit:

- **NHS: Postural Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)**: Offers clear and detailed guidance on PoTS, its causes, symptoms, and treatments.
- **Dysautonomia International**: A global resource offering educational materials and the latest research on autonomic disorders like PoTS.
- **PoTS UK**: A UK charity dedicated to supporting patients with PoTS through education, advocacy, and research.

This leaflet is intended to provide general guidance. Please consult your healthcare provider for specific advice tailored to your situation.

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.