

Mayo Clinic Minute

Living with POTS

Video	Audio
Christine Esposito	"I was diagnosed with POTS back in 2002."
Vivien Williams	For 14 years, Christine Esposito has struggled with POTS, or postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome.
Christine Esposito has POTS	"The first things that happened to me were passing out, started having a lot of chest pains, palpitations – things that were not normal to me."
Vivien Williams	Christine's symptoms progressed ...
Christine Esposito	... "chronic pain, migraines, GI issues, chronic fatigue syndrome."
Vivien Williams	POTS prevented Christine from participating in and enjoying life.
Jeremy Cutsforth-Gregory, M.D. Neurology Mayo Clinic	"Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome or POTS is largely a disorder of autonomic instability."
Vivien Williams	Mayo Clinic neurologist Dr. Jeremy Cutsforth-Gregory says POTS symptoms vary from person to person, but essentially all POTS patients have two symptoms in common: a rapid heart rate and dizziness when standing up from a resting position.
Jeremy Cutsforth-Gregory, M.D.	"They develop symptoms of insufficient blood flow to the brain."
Vivien Williams	You see, your heart pumps blood to the brain when it beats. If the brain senses that it's not getting enough blood, it triggers a sudden and dramatic increase in pulse rate, and you get dizzy. A simple test called the head-up tilt or tilt-table test

	helps doctors diagnose POTS in minutes.
Jeremy Cutsforth-Gregory, M.D.	“So the diagnostic criteria for POTS requires an increment or increase in heart rate of at least 30 beats per minute from the supine to the standing position if the patients are 20 years or older. The criteria for patients who are 12 to 19 are 40 beats or more.”
Vivien Williams	Mayo Clinic’s Dr. Phillip Low coined the term POTS in the 1990s, but the disease has been around a lot longer than that. And so has Mayo Clinic’s connection to it.
Jeremy Cutsforth-Gregory, M.D.	“It, actually, has been described as far back as the Civil War, although it went by a different name. It went by Effort Syndrome.”
Vivien Williams	Mayo’s founder Dr. William Worrell Mayo examined young men enlisted to fight in the Civil War. Some complained of fainting and dizziness. The thought was that these troops were too scared or lazy to fight, and their dizziness was a sign of weakness. Experts say they likely had POTS.
Vivien Williams	Today, patients like Christine are relieved when a diagnosis confirms that their symptoms are real. And while there’s no cure, there are ways to manage POTS. Medication may help, but the keys to feeling better include ...
Jeremy Cutsforth-Gregory, M.D.	“... fluid, salt, compression and exercise.”
Vivien Williams	Salt allows your body to hold onto fluid inside blood vessels, which can help keep blood from pooling in the legs and abdomen. Compression also bolsters blood flow, and exercise benefits overall health.
Christine Esposito	“My dog’s name is Zoe; she is a perfect fit for me.”
Vivien Williams	Christine participated in Mayo’s POTS boot camp. It’s a program that helps patients learn how to manage symptoms.
Christine Esposito	“They teach you how to live with POTS basically — everything from posture to

	exercise to eating.”
Vivien Williams	There is no cure for POTS, which effects young people and adults.
Christine Esposito	“On days that I don’t feel well, Zoe will lay by me. She will rest with me. She will get up. She will walk to the bathroom with me. On days I feel great, we are outside in the yard.”
Vivien Williams	But, by managing symptoms, people like Christine can get back to life. For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Vivien Williams.