



College Accommodations for Students with Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)

Classroom accommodations are required for those with medical disability to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. While students with disabilities are eligible for *reasonable* accommodations, they are still expected to adhere to University policies and procedures. Students should act as their own advocates and speak directly with faculty concerning their accommodations.

CLASSES

Flexibility with attendance policy. For classes with an attendance policy, work with the student to determine a reasonable number of absences at the beginning of the semester.

Priority seating. Allow student to sit near the exit without need for climbing stairs to seat.

Flexible seating positions. Allow student to sit with feet elevated, to help blood return to the heart. Some students do better when seated on the ground leaning against a wall, or with lower legs elevated to heart level. Allowing students to frequently move their legs, sit cross-legged, sit on their knees, or be in a more reclined position can help reduce tachycardia and increase blood flow to the brain.

Food/drink during class/exams. Maintaining hydration through consumption of salty snacks and fluid consumption is important to continued function of the student.

Note taker. Especially for students who suffer from cognitive impairment, a note taker can be a great resource to level the playing field.

Permission to record lectures. Students who suffer from brain fog from the exertion to get to the classroom may benefit by being able to listen to the class session again later.

Copy of lecture notes/PowerPoint slides. Students with POTS may have frequent absences. Providing them with a copy of the notes or slides can help the student stay abreast of what is happening in class.

Appropriate use of calculator. Brain fog can interfere with even simple calculations. Allowing the calculator can prevent errors and allow the student to focus their energy on the larger issues associated with the problem.

TESTING

Extended time for exams and quizzes. Due to brain fog and other symptoms, increased time (1.5-2x) for testing is appropriate.

Distraction limited testing environment/separate testing space. Students suffering from cognitive or concentration issues can take tests in a separate room to decrease distractions. This may be in an empty room, the disability office or elsewhere on campus. Ask if you can take it at an optimum time when your symptoms are typically less pronounced.

For more information, please visit standinguptopots.org.



Computer for essay/short answer. Use of computer for essay questions on test or tests that require a lot of writing can be useful for some students with POTS.

One final examination per day. Final exams are exhausting for students with POTS, and their cognitive impairment tends to increase with fatigue. By limiting their final examinations to one per day, the student has a chance to show how much they have truly learned in each class.

RESIDENCE HALL

Air Conditioning. Temperature control is an issue for many people with POTS. It is important that they live in an area that can be temperature-controlled year round.

Private Room. Many with POTS suffer from significant pain syndromes - migraines, abdominal pain, neuropathic pain – and need a quiet place where they can rest during the day. Maintenance of a regular sleep schedule is also imperative in physical and cognitive function.

Private/semi-private bathroom in or near room. Fatigue is a real issue for these students. Walking down the hall to the bathroom uses precious energy. Many with POTS also suffer from gastroparesis and other abdominal issues that result in intensive need for nearby bathroom facilities.

Accessible room. When possible, a room on the first floor that allows avoidance of stairs and/or elevator is best for the person with POTS. Students may use a wheelchair or other mobility device, and need an accessible room.

Extra key to room. Fainting and other health issues may require friends/family members to access the room to check on the student.

Emergency Plan. Many with POTS faint if they get up too quickly. It is important that someone check on the student to be sure they were able to make it out of the room when fire alarms or other emergencies occur.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOMMODATIONS

Priority registration. Students know the cycle of their symptoms and can choose a schedule that will minimize symptoms conflicting with classes. They may avoid early morning classes or schedule breaks between classes.

Parking accommodations. Many people with POTS have handicapped parking placards. Help them find parking as close to the classroom and residence hall as possible.

DISCUSSIONS TO HAVE WITH FACULTY

Late arrival or early departures for health reasons. Ask faculty to give full attendance credit, if appropriate, even if you miss part of the class period for health reasons.



Breaks during class. Faculty allow a lot of freedom in the classroom, but if you need to stand or leave the room regularly, it is a good idea to explain your medical issues in advance.

Flexibility with assignment deadlines in collaboration with the student. Faculty are more likely to be accommodating if you explain your condition to them early in the semester – before work is turned in late or excessive absences have accrued.

Assignment submission via email. For many with POTS, fatigue is a real concern. Minimizing steps by allowing the student to submit their work electronically may help to keep them in your classroom more days per week.