



The Heartbeat Clinic

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Head up Sleep

What is it?

Head up sleep is recommended to POTS patients. It doesn't help all patients, but can easily be tested. Incline the head of your bed 6-8 inches for head up sleep. Sleeping with a wedge or extra pillows will not help in the same manner as head up sleep. You can buy a set of plastic bed risers from many stores including Walmart. It is typically found in the home organization section. It comes with 4 risers, put 2 stacked inside each other under each side of the head of the bed. You can also raise your bed with haddock blocks or other sturdy materials. This creates a steep angle, and you may struggle to rest the first night or two. After a week, you will know if it works. You should wake up less during the night and feel more rested and energetic in the mornings. Because of the steep incline, head up sleep is not recommended for those with a history of back pain.

How does it help?

During the day, blood pools in the legs of POTS patients. When a POTS patient lays flat, the pooled blood rushes towards the head, heart, and lungs. Many feel a racing heart, chest tightness, or panic shortly after laying down. This shift in fluids also causes an adrenaline reaction in many POTS patients, worsening symptoms. By morning, your blood has balanced out equally throughout the body, but extreme dizziness and possible syncope occurs as you stand up and the blood rushes back to pool in the legs. Head up sleep reduces the shifts in blood distribution. If head up sleep is beneficial to you, you should go to sleep more easily and be less symptomatic in the morning than when sleeping flat.

