Cardiovascular & Circulatory Symptoms

Heart & Blood Pressure Problems

* Very high heart rate (tachycardia)

* Chest pressure or heart pain

* Fluttering or straining heartbeat

* Very low blood pressure, especially when upright

* Orthostatic intolerance / POTS

* Reduced circulating blood volume

These symptoms point to problems involving the autonomic nervous system and cardiovascular regulation. Some conditions that can be associated with this combination include:

*POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) — rapid heart rate and symptoms when standing.

*Orthostatic hypotension — blood pressure drops on standing.

*Hypovolemia — low circulating blood volume/dehydration.

*Dysautonomia — broader autonomic nervous system dysfunction affecting heart rate, blood pressure, circulation, digestion, temperature regulation, and more.

*Cardiac rhythm disorders (arrhythmias) — can cause fluttering, racing heartbeat, chest discomfort, dizziness, or fainting.

*Connective tissue disorders (like hypermobility syndromes) can sometimes be linked with POTS and circulation issues.

Common symptoms that often occur

*Dizziness or fainting

*Fatigue/exhaustion

*Brain fog

*Shortness of breath

*Cold hands/feet

*Exercise intolerance

*Shakiness or weakness

*Nausea

Because chest pain, very high heart rate, or severe low blood pressure can sometimes be serious, it's important to get medical evaluation - especially if symptoms are new, worsening, or causing fainting.

Doctors often evaluate these symptoms with:

*Orthostatic vitals (lying vs standing HR/BP)

*ECG/EKG

*Holter or event monitor

*Blood tests

*Echocardiogram

*Tilt-table testing

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1. Orthostatic Intolerance (OI)

A core feature in ME-ICC is the inability to maintain stable circulation when upright, resulting from autonomic dysregulation and low circulating blood volume (hypovolemia).

POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome): An excessive, sustained increase in heart rate (typically >30 bpm for adults) within 10 minutes of standing up, accompanied by dizziness, palpitations, or brain fog.

NMH (Neurally Mediated Hypotension): A sudden drop in blood pressure after prolonged standing, leading to lightheadedness, weakness, or near-fainting.

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*Reduced Blood Volume & Circulation

Unlike typical dehydration, many with ME have lower absolute blood volume, making the heart work significantly harder to pump enough blood to the brain and muscles.

*Decreased Cardiac Output: Reduced stroke volume causes the heart to beat faster (tachycardia) to compensate for the lack of circulating fluid.

*Microvascular/Endothelial Dysfunction: Impaired blood vessel relaxation causes inefficient oxygen delivery, contributing directly to "rapid heart fatigue" and profound exercise intolerance.

*Chest Pain & Cardiac Stress

Non-ischemic chest pain and discomfort are common in ME.

*Usually triggered by autonomic spasms, coronary microvascular dysfunction, or neurovascular inflammation rather than blocked coronary arteries.

*Because ME relies on early anaerobic metabolism to generate energy, even minor physical, mental, or emotional exertion can cause cardiac stress and disproportionate tachycardia.

*Overlapping Risks (inherited cardiac conditions)

While cardiovascular symptoms in ME are functional and usually present with normal standard ECGs and stress tests, it is essential to monitor for co-occurring Inherited Cardiac Conditions (ICC). Because ME limits physical activity, it can also complicate the management of traditional cardiovascular risk factors, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

*Management & Mitigation

Because these symptoms are systemic and physiological (not psychological), management focuses on supporting the autonomic nervous system and preserving energy:

*Pacing: Strict adherence to activity pacing to prevent severe post-exertional crashes that exacerbate cardiac stress.

*Hydration & Electrolytes: Increasing fluid and sodium intake (as safely advised by a physician) expands blood volume and eases orthostatic strain.

*Compression Garments: Using medical-grade compression stockings or abdominal binders to promote blood return to the heart and brain.

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