

# Tourette Syndrome

## 1. What is Tourette Syndrome?

Tourette Syndrome is a neurological disorder characterized by repetitive, stereotyped, involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics. Tics typically show up between ages 2 and 15, with the average being around 6 years of age. Males are about three to four times more likely than females to develop Tourette syndrome.

## 2. What are the Symptoms?

Tics are classified as either simple or complex.

- Simple tics are sudden, brief, repetitive movements that involve a limited number of muscle groups. Simple tics include: eye blinking, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, and head or neck jerking. Simple Vocalizations might include: repetitive throat clearing, sniffing or grunting sounds.
- Complex tics are distinct, coordinated patterns of movements involving several muscle groups. Complex tics include: facial grimacing combined with a head twist and a shoulder shrug. Other tics may include hopping, jumping, bending or twisting. Sniffing or touching objects. More complex vocal tics include: words or phrases. The most dramatic and disabling tics include motor movements that result in self-harm, such as punching oneself in the face or vocal tics including coprolalia (uttering socially inappropriate words such as swearing. \*Coprolalia is only present in a small number (10 to 15 percent) of individuals with Tourette Syndrome.

## 3. What disorders are associated with Tourette Syndrome?

Many individuals with Tourette Syndrome experience additional neurobehavioral problems that often cause more impairments than the tics themselves. These include inattention, hyperactivity and ADHD; Problems with reading, writing and arithmetic; obsessive compulsive symptoms such as intrusive thoughts/worries and repetitive behaviors. People with TS have reported problems with depression and anxiety disorders.

#### 4. **How is Tourette Syndrome Diagnosed?**

Tourette Syndrome is a diagnosis that doctors make after verifying that the patient has had both motor and vocal tics for at least 1 year. The existence of other neurological or psychiatric conditions can also help doctors arrive at a diagnosis.

#### 5. **How is Tourette Syndrome treated?**

Although there's no cure for Tourette syndrome, treatments are available. Many people with Tourette syndrome don't need treatment when symptoms aren't troublesome. Tics often lessen or become controlled after the teen years. Effective medications are available for those whose symptoms interfere with functioning. Unfortunately, there is no one medication that is helpful to all people with TS, nor does any medication completely eliminate symptoms. Behavioral treatments such as awareness training and competing response training can also be used to reduce tics. While behavioral therapies, such as biofeedback or supportive therapy hasn't been shown to reduce tic symptoms, they can help a person with TS better cope with the disorder and deal with the secondary social and emotional problems that sometimes occur.

### **Resources**

- [The Tourette Association of America](#) (formerly known as the Tourette Syndrome Association)
- [TS Parents Online](#)
- [Tourette Syndrome Fact Sheet](#)
- [Tourette Syndrome Overview](#)
- [What is Tourette Syndrome: Written for Children](#)