

Tic Disorder and Tourette Syndrome

What are tics?

Tics are sudden movements or vocal sounds that are repeated. Tics can be worse with excitement, anxiety, or stress. They are not under a person's control except for short times.

What is Tourette Syndrome?

Tourette syndrome (TS) means that your child has both vocal and motor tics that have lasted more than one year. The exact cause of TS is unknown, but it comes from the brain.

Tics and TS run in families. Because of this, they are called genetic disorders. Both are diagnosed based on your child's history and symptoms.

Types of tics

Motor. These are sudden movements of muscles.

Simple motor tics involve a few muscles:

- eye blinking
- face movements
- shoulder shrugging
- head jerking or bobbing

Complex motor tics involve many muscles:

- hopping
- bending
- jumping
- twisting

Vocal. These are repeated sounds. They include throat clearing, sniffing, or grunting.

Tics are grouped by how long they have been present:

- **Provisional.** Tics have been present for less than one year.
- **Persistent.** Tics have been present for more than one year.

Many children will have only one type of tic; either motor or vocal. Other children will go on to develop Tourette Syndrome (TS).

How is my child affected?

- Tics come and go over time. They can vary in type, amount, and location.
- One of 3 children with tics get better, one of 3 stay the same, and one of 3 still has Tics as they become adults.

How is my child treated?

- Most kids do not need medicine for their tics. If tics are a problem with daily activities or bother your child, we start with behavioral therapy if they are above 8 years old. Medicine may be needed at times. Your child's health care provider will help you decide if medicine is needed.

Therapy for social and emotional support

A therapist can help your child deal with social or emotional issues related to their tics. They also teach ways of reducing the tics through:

- stress management.
- biofeedback and relaxation.
- habit reversal.

The therapist can also help others in your child's life learn how to respond to your child's tics.

Educational support

The school should meet your child's needs. A special plan for school called a 504 plan may be needed to help your child in school. Talk with your child's teacher and counselor about this type of plan. The plan may include:

- a private study area
- breaks in class
- oral exams
- untimed testing
- taking exams in a private classroom

Other common conditions

Some people have other conditions along with tics or TS.

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD).** May have a hard time staying on task or controlling themselves. Symptoms may include getting easily off task, being messy, losing things, being forgetful, always moving, interrupting, unable to take turns, and easily upset.
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).** Has repeated thoughts and behaviors they cannot control. Symptoms can include fear of germs or dirt, need for neatness, counting, evening objects up. Thoughts are repeated over and over again.
- **Depression.** Feels very sad, hopeless, or that life isn't worth living. At times, it may lead to thoughts of death.
- **Anxiety.** Has worry or fear when you would normally not expect it.
- **Learning difficulties.** Has a hard time learning basic reading, spelling, writing, or math skills. Most (90%) children with tics or TS have average or above average intelligence.

Treatments for these conditions need to be done separately from the tic or TS treatment.

- **Mental health.** Psychiatric therapy or counseling can help your child.
- **Medicines.** Your child's doctor may prescribe medicine if needed.
- **Home and school.** Working with you and your child for school and home support. Helping you learn how to deal with and manage behaviors.

Helpful websites:

- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/tourette/detail_tourette.htm
- Tourette Syndrome Association
<http://tsa-usa.org/>
- Kids Health

http://kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/brain/k_tourette.html

- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Tic Disorders Specialty Clinic
www.uwm.edu/~dwoods/

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.