

Tic disorder

This leaflet aims to answer your questions about tic disorder. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor.

What is Tic disorder?

Tics are involuntary repetitive movements (called motor tics) or sounds (called vocal tics) that you make without warning. You cannot completely control them. Tics usually wax and wane and this means that they may happen more often and sometimes happen less often during a day. They may appear around the age of five and most of them go away on their own.

How common are tics?

Tics are common. About 1 in 5 of children may experience tic during the life. They are more common during the school age, between the ages of 7-15 years. Tic is more commonly seen in boys.

Are tics serious?

Tics are usually not serious but can be annoying. They can affect everyday activities. Some children learn how to suppress their tics.

Are the tics permanent?

Most are temporary and resolve over time. Generally, 1 in 100 of children may present with chronic tic which means that tic will persist and become severe. From those children who develop tics, 1 in 3 will improve by an adult age, 1 in 3 continue to have a mild form and 1 in 3 become severe by an adult age.

Is there any test to diagnose tic disorder?

There is no specific test for diagnosing tics.

What different types of tics are present?

Motor tics: these are involuntary movements caused by spasm like contraction of muscles, most involve face, mouth, eyes, head, neck, and shoulders. For example, a child has excessive shrugging shoulder that happens more often and out of place, biting lips or facial grimacing, wrinkling nose, and jerking head.

Vocal tics: when child produces sudden sounds like clearing throat, humming, coughing, grunting, sniffing, and repeating a word or phrase out of context. Some children may have both the motor and vocal tics. Some tics are called '**Simple tics**' when there are brief movements involving one muscle group like eye blinking or shoulder shrugging. Some tics are called '**Complex tics**' when several muscle groups are involved. For example, a child may have facial grimacing combined with a head twist and a shoulder shrug.

Some children may have an uncomfortable bodily sensation (like tension, itching or pressure) that builds up right before a motor or vocal tics (**called premonitory urge**).

What causes tics? What makes tics worse?

We do not know why some people get tics while others will not have tics. It is caused by the way our brain is wired. The cause of tics is not fully understood. Most people with tics, can identify someone in their family with tics. Tics are worse with stress, anxiety, tiredness, and boredom. Some children may be able to hide tics for a short period of time, but this may be stressful and cause a release of more tics later.

What can be done to reduce tics?

Various techniques to improve relaxing you like exercise and listening to the music. Also, ways to reduce your stress will help reduce tics. You may need to write down what helps and what makes the tics worse. A good sleep pattern, distraction, and relaxation technique are beneficial.

What is provisional tic disorder?

This was previously called transient tic disorder. This is the diagnosis most children will receive after they have a simple motor or vocal tic which lasted less than a year. These children often stop having tics on their own.

What is a chronic tic disorder:

Children with tic disorder who continue to have tics for more than a year without going away for any prolonged period.

What is Tourette's syndrome?

Children who exhibit multiple motor tics and vocal tics for more than a year under the age of 18 and with no Tic free period of more than 3 months will receive diagnosis of Tourette's syndrome. Most children with Tourette's syndrome may have other symptoms including

obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorder.

How can you manage your tics?

To understand that children are not doing this on purpose. They often happen without child being able to control them.

To understand the triggers and reduce the triggering factors; these include anxiety, stress, excitement and boredom. Therefore, enough sleep and engaging in various exercises and minimising stress will help.

To understand that Tics often decrease when a child is focused on an engaging activity.

To understand that most tics do not require medical treatment as they improve over time.
To inform child that there is nothing to be ashamed of and this is very common in children.
They should not pay too much attention to Tics.

It will help if parents talk to school to understand the child's feeling and for teacher and staff in school to do the same. Teacher will need to talk to the child's peers in school, so they understand the tics. Otherwise, it may lead to bullying if peers do not understand this disorder. In some circumstances, child needs to be allowed to leave the classroom if tics become overwhelming

Children will need to be seen by their GP. Sometimes, they may need to be seen by a paediatrician to confirm the diagnosis. They may also need to be seen by a psychologist or a child and adolescent psychiatrist if tics are causing significant distress or interfering with everyday life.

References:

[Tics - Treatment - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Self-help for 12 – 25 years old - Happy Maps](#)

Tourette Action –Support Group www.tourettes-action.org.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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