

Tourette Syndrome (TS)



What is TS?

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a condition of the nervous system. It causes people to have “tics.” Tics are sudden twitches, movements, or sounds that people do repeatedly. People who have tics cannot stop their body from doing these things. People with TS have two forms of tics: motor tics, involving movements of the body, like blinking; and vocal tics, involving sounds made with the voice, like grunting. The tics occur many times a day, nearly every day, for at least a year. Symptoms usually begin when a child is 5 to 10 years of age.

The media often portray people with TS as involuntarily shouting out swear words (coprolalia), or repeating the words of other people (echolalia). However, these symptoms are rare, and are not required for a diagnosis of TS.

What conditions are associated with TS?

TS often occurs with other related conditions. Among children diagnosed with TS, about 80% also have been diagnosed with at least one additional mental health, behavioral, or developmental condition. The two most common conditions are attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (50% to 70%) and obsessive-compulsive disorder (30% to 50%). People with TS also have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and learning disabilities.

How many people are affected by TS?

The exact number of people with TS is unknown. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) scientists recently used data from 2007 to estimate that 3 out of every 1,000 U.S. children (about 148,000) 6 through 17 years of age had been diagnosed with TS. Higher prevalence estimates obtained from community studies likely mean that there are a significant number of individuals who have TS, but who have not been diagnosed. TS is three to four times more common among males than females.

How is TS managed?

Management of TS should include timely and accurate diagnosis, education, and behavioral or medication treatment, if needed. Related conditions must be considered and also might require treatment.

What is CDC doing about TS?

- CDC funds and partners with the Tourette Syndrome Association (TSA) to provide health education and training to physicians, nurses, social workers, and educators on the standard diagnostic and treatment practices for TS and related disorders.
- CDC assisted in developing a module on TS for the 2007 National Survey of Child Health, a nationally representative survey providing the first ever U.S. prevalence of TS among youth 6 through 17 years of age, including data on racial and ethnic disparities, severity, and related conditions.
- CDC supports research at the University of Oklahoma to conduct an epidemiology study of tics and TS among school-aged children to better understand the prevalence, associated behaviors, and related conditions among children with TS.
- CDC sponsors the University of Rochester and the University of South Florida in studying the impact of tic disorders, including TS, among youth, on individuals, families, and communities.

For more information about TS, please visit the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/tourette/default.htm>