

Tourette's syndrome (TS)

Tourette's syndrome is a neurological condition which is usually prevalent from childhood. The key feature of Tourette's is tics, which can be described as involuntary movements, actions and sounds.

It is common for people with Tourette's to have a co-occurring condition such as ADHD, autism, or OCD.

Current research suggests that one percent of school children will be diagnosed with Tourette's.

There is no cure for Tourette's syndrome however with treatment a person's tics can be managed and improved.

A person with Tourette's syndrome might have both physical and vocal tics. Tics can change daily in severity and frequency, however, environmental factors such as stress and tiredness can influence the severity of a person's Tics. Some examples of physical tics include:

- Blinking
- Jerking of the head or other limbs
- Grimacing
- Jumping
- Shoulder shrugging
- Touching objects and other people

Some examples of vocal tics include:

- Grunting
- Whistling
- Tongue clicking
- Throat clearing
- Repeating a sound, word or phrase
- Swearing (coprolalia)

Most people with Tourette's syndrome experience something called a premonitory urge before a tic, this has been compared to the physical feeling you get before needing to itch or sneeze. If a person attempts to suppress a tic this can increase the premonitory urge. Once a tic has been 'performed' the premonitory urge will be relieved. Although tics are involuntary, with practice many people are able to suppress and control their tics for short periods of time. However, this can take a great deal of concentration and energy resulting in it making the person very tired. A person may have a sudden outburst of tics after a day trying to control them. Tics can be less noticeable during activities that involve a high level of concentration.

For Tourette's syndrome to be diagnosed multiple motor tics and at least one vocal tic must be present for at least 12 months. Tourette's can only be diagnosed by observing and evaluating symptoms.



As mentioned, there is no cure for Tourette's syndrome but for some individuals with Tourette's treatment may be recommended. These treatments are usually:

- **Behavioural therapy**- there are two types of therapy usually used for a person who has Tourette's. These are habit reversal training which involves working out the triggers of a person's tics and finding ways for the person's urge to tic to be relieved. The other form of therapy is exposure with response prevention (ERP) which involves a person facing the things that urge them to tic and then training them to tolerate the feeling whilst suppressing the tic.
- **Medication**- this can be used to help reduce the frequency and/or intensity of a person's tics for a period of time.

