

# Tourette's Syndrome



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Tourette's syndrome (TS), is an illness of the nerves. The main feature of TS is tics—multiple movements or sounds that are sudden and meaningless actions or vocalizations. Most tics happen the same way each time. Many people with TS have other mental illnesses. Usually, TS begins in childhood or adolescence.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of TS can disappear for weeks or months at a time. Symptoms of TS change in how extreme they are. TS is characterized by tics.

- Facial tics, such as rapid blinking or mouth twitches
- Vocal tics, such as coughing or sniffing
- Motor tics, such as movement of the arms and legs
- Yelling or swearing
- Uncomfortable sensations that will not go away until a tic appears
- Difficulties in relationships, work, or school
- Difficulty focusing
- Difficulty sitting still
- Other mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression

## What are the causes?

Although the cause has not been fully established, there is growing evidence that TS is caused by an illness of the nerves within the brain.

## Diagnosis

There is no medical test to diagnose Tourette's syndrome. A primary care doctor will perform a medical and neurological examination. Some people may also get radiological tests (e.g., CT scans, MRIs), EEG (electroencephalogram), and blood tests.

## Treatment

Not everyone with TS is disabled by their symptoms, so medication is not always needed. Surgeries and other procedural treatments are not usually recommended. Most common treatment forms include:

- **Relaxation techniques**
- **Behavioral therapies**
- **Psychotherapy** (talking therapy) to address some of the self-esteem and self-consciousness issues associated with their illness. This can be a great resource for developing coping skills as well.

With effective treatment of their tics (and other coexisting psychiatric illnesses), most people with TS can see their symptoms decrease and can continue living the lives they want to live.