# Tourette Syndrome

## A guide for children, teens, and caregivers



Tourette syndrome is a developmental condition involving both movement and sound tics over time. Tics are involuntary movements or noises that begin in childhood. A child may briefly hold them back, but this can be difficult. A clinician reviews the history to distinguish Tourette syndrome from other tic conditions and decide what support is needed.

## Common symptoms

- Repeated blinking or facial tics
- Head jerks or shoulder shrugs
- Grunting, sniffing, or throat clearing
- Repeated words or body movements
- Tics that change over time

Most people with Tourette syndrome do not have swearing tics.

## Why does it happen?

Genes play an important role in Tourette syndrome. Other influences are still being studied. Tics are not due to poor discipline or lack of effort.

## Treatment and outlook

Tics that do not cause pain, distress, or interference may need only education and support. If treatment is wanted, ask about comprehensive behavioral intervention for tics (CBIT).

With a trained therapist, the child learns to notice tics or warning urges, practice a competing response, and identify situations that make tics harder. Caregivers support practice without punishment or constant reminders. This does not mean tics are deliberate.

Medication may help troublesome tics, but benefits and side effects need review. ADHD, OCD, anxiety, or learning concerns may need their own support. Tics often change over time; the goal is comfort and participation.

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# Living with Tourette syndrome

## Practical steps between appointments



## Home and school

Respond calmly. Explain that tics are involuntary. Avoid demanding that they stop or repeatedly drawing attention to them.

Plan school support. Discuss writing time, computer access, or other adjustments. Address teasing and bullying with staff promptly.

Follow your child's lead. Ask what helps. Encourage enjoyable activities and therapist-taught skills without pressure or blame.

## When to seek help

Ask the clinician about tics that cause pain, distress, or school problems.

Seek urgent care for serious injury. Get help with bullying or safety concerns.

### Get urgent help

For suicidal thoughts or a mental health crisis, call or text **988** in the US. Call **911** for immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency. Children and teens: tell a trusted adult right away.

## For your next appointment

Are tics painful or exhausting? Is holding them back affecting concentration? Ask about CBIT access, school support, and other concerns that bother your child more than the visible tics.

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# Sources and References

1. **Treatment of Tourette Syndrome**
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention · 2026
https://www.cdc.gov/tourette-syndrome/treatment/index.html