

Understanding Tourette Syndrome

1 in 100 people in the U.S. has mild Tourette syndrome.

1 Introduction

Tourette syndrome (TS) is a genetically inherited neurological disorder that is associated with repetitive movements (e.g. blinking, shrugging) or vocalizations (e.g. grunting, throat clearing) that occur involuntarily. These tics can be simple or complex and are not easily controlled. On average, symptom onset of TS is observed in children ages 3-9. Often, tics will begin to decrease during adolescence and may even completely disappear by adulthood. However, in some cases, tics may worsen with age.

2 Diagnosis

According to the DSM-V, for a person to be diagnosed with TS, they must exhibit the following:

- Both motor and vocal tics (may not occur simultaneously)
- Had tics for at least a year
- Have tics that started before the age of 18
- Have symptoms that are not due to taking medicine or other drugs or due to a separate medical condition (e.g. seizures)

3 Risk Factors

Tourette syndrome is a genetically complex disorder — meaning that, although genes influence its inheritance pattern, there is not one particular gene that is associated with its onset. Additionally, genetic interactions with outside factors may also contribute to TS. Research has found that the following factors may be associated with TS:

- Smoking during pregnancy
- Pregnancy complications
- Low birthweight
- Infection (researchers are still determining whether children are more likely to develop tics following infections)

5 Treatments

While there are certain treatments and therapies that can be used to help manage tics, there is no cure for TS. Medication can be prescribed for individuals with severe or disruptive tics; however, it is unable to eliminate tics completely. Another option for those with TS is to undergo behavioral therapy, such as habit reversal or Comprehensive Behavioral Intervention for Tics (CBIT). Therapists can provide patients with strategies for reducing the number, severity and impact of tics.

Did you know?

Males are about 3 to 4 times more likely than females to develop Tourette syndrome.

For more information on Tourette syndrome and supportive resources, please visit www.tourette.org.

References:

<https://www.americanbrainfoundation.org/diseases/tourette-syndrome/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/tourette/facts.html>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tourette-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20350465>