

TOURETTE'S SYNDROME (TS)

What is Tourette's Syndrome?

Tourette's disorder, or Tourette's syndrome (TS) as it is frequently called, is a neurologic syndrome. The essential feature of Tourette's are multiple tics that are sudden, rapid, recurrent, non-rhythmic, stereotypical, purposeless movements or vocalizations.

Are boys or girls more likely to have Tourette's syndrome?

The sex of the child can influence the expression of the Tourette's syndrome gene. Girls with the gene have a 70 percent chance of displaying symptoms; boys with the gene have a 99 percent chance of displaying symptoms. Ratios of boys with Tourette's syndrome to girls with Tourette's syndrome are 3:1.

What are the symptoms of Tourette's syndrome?

Approximately 50 percent of patients meet criteria for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and this may be the more impairing problem. Approximately one-third of patients meet criteria for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) or have other forms of anxiety. Learning disabilities are common as well as developmental stuttering. Social discomfort, self-consciousness and depressed mood frequently occur, especially as children reach adolescence.

What causes these symptoms?

Although the cause has not been definitely established, there is considerable evidence that Tourette's syndrome arises from abnormal metabolism of dopamine, a neurotransmitter.³ Other neurotransmitters may be involved.

What treatments are available for Tourette's syndrome?

Not everyone is disabled by his or her symptoms, so medication may not be necessary. When symptoms interfere with functioning, medication can effectively improve attention span, decrease impulsivity, hyperactivity, tics, and obsessive-compulsive symptomatology. Relaxation techniques and behavior therapy may also be useful for tics, ADD symptoms, and OCD symptoms.

³ A biochemical substance that transmits nerve impulses from one nerve cell to another at a synapse.