



Tourette Syndrome

Tourette Syndrome is a chronic hereditary neurobiological disorder that is characterized by tics, which are involuntary sudden repetitive movements and/or vocal outbursts. TS occurs in 1 out of every 1000 persons. Symptoms usually begin between the ages of 6 and 10, and it is 3 times more likely to occur in boys than girls. It is a highly misunderstood disorder that causes a ripple effect in social, emotional, and educational development.

- Simple motor tics include blinking, grimacing, jerking, and shrugging. Complex motor tics include hopping, deep knee bends, tearing paper and touching people.
- Vocal tics are any sound, word or phrase that appears meaningless or out of context. Simple vocal tics include whistling, shouting, coughing, and sniffing.
- Complex vocal tics are involuntary repetitive speech or echoing what others say. The most infamous vocal tic, which is also the rarest, involves obscenities, cursing, or ethnic slurs. Unfortunately, the media focus on this unusual symptom has served to perpetuate misconceptions about TS.
- The severity and frequency of tics change throughout daily activities and throughout one's lifetime. Some tics can be suppressed for short periods of time, especially when the person is absorbed in an extremely compelling activity. Symptoms of TS tend to lessen with age.
- Environmental factors that influence the symptoms of TS are stress, fatigue, illness, excitement and transitions.
- There is no cure for TS, but medications may help control tics.
- TS is not related to intellectual disability; however, children with TS may qualify for an Individual Education Plan under federal law because of co-occurring conditions such as: Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder; Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; sensory processing and executive function deficits.
- Some behaviors, like difficulty with handwriting, are related to TS. Writing may be slow and actually painful. There may also be difficulty copying text or transferring thoughts to written word.
- People with TS are subject to stares and ridicule when they leave home. Their behavior may be misinterpreted, or at worst, targeted by bullies. With support and understanding people with TS can and do lead productive lives. Successful surgeons, teachers, musicians and athletes live with TS.
- For worship services where tics may be disruptive, it is best if the person with TS discloses their condition to the presider and perhaps to people in the pews, so sensitivity can be demonstrated.

Resources:

Fact sheet from the National Institutes of Health: http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/tourette/detail_tourette.htm

National Tourette Syndrome Association, www.tsa-usa.org

*For more information contact Marsha Rivas, Equal Access Ministry
Diocese of Toledo 419-244-6711 mrivas@toledodiocese.org*



EQUAL ACCESS MINISTRY