



**North East  
Learning Trust**

**SEND newsletter**

# TICS

**Tics are fast, repetitive muscle movements that result in sudden and difficult to control body jolts or sounds.**

They are fairly common in childhood and typically first appear at around 5 years of age. Very occasionally they can start in adulthood.

Tics are not usually serious and normally improve over time. But they can be frustrating and interfere with everyday activities.

[Tourette's syndrome](#), a term that's used when tics have lasted for more than a year.

Some tics can affect body movement (motor tics) and others result in a sound (vocal or phonic tics).

Some examples of tics include:

- blinking, wrinkling the nose or grimacing
- jerking or banging the head
- clicking fingers
- touching other people or things
- coughing, grunting or sniffing
- repeating a sound or phrase – in a small number of cases, this may be something obscene or offensive.

Tics can happen randomly and they may be associated with something such as stress, anxiety, tiredness, excitement or happiness. They tend to get worse if they're talked about or focused on as the child becomes more self-aware.

Children often describe them as starting with an unpleasant sensation that builds up in the body until relieved by the tic – known as an urge – although they can sometimes be partly suppressed.

([www.NHS.uk](http://www.NHS.uk))

Tics are not serious. If you are worried about your child's tics please contact your GP as there are some treatments available if they are causing your child distress or are accompanied by anger, depression or self-harm.

In most cases, tics improve over time or stop completely.

Sometimes they may just last a few months, but often they come and go over several years. They are normally most severe from around 8 years of age until teenage years, and usually start to improve after puberty.

# How to help your child

- **Try to help your child avoid stress or boredom – help them find a hobby they enjoy or discuss relaxation techniques**
- **Help them get to bed at a reasonable hour – and remove electric devices e.g. telephones**
- **Try to ignore your child's tic and not mention it**
- **Do not draw attention to it**
- **Reassure them that it is nothing to be embarrassed about**
- **Tell school and other people you see regularly that your child has a tic but ask them also not to mention it**
- **If the child is becoming aware of it in lessons, please contact school so a time out card can be issued so that the child does not become embarrassed in class**

## **Tourettes Action UK – 0300 777 8427**

Tourettes Action are the UK's leading support charity for people with Tourette Syndrome (TS) and their families. TS is a neurological condition; the main symptoms are physical and vocal tics. Up to 85% of people with TS experience co-occurring conditions such as anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Their vision is for people with TS to receive the practical support and social acceptance they need to help them live their lives to the full.

# Key information

## Important contacts

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