



FACULTY OF MEDICINE | UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Tourette syndrome facts

Tourette Syndrome (TS) is a neurological or "*neurochemical*" disorder characterized by tics -- involuntary, rapid, sudden movements or vocalizations that occur repeatedly in the same way.

The most common first symptom is a facial tic, such as rapidly blinking eyes or twitches of the mouth. However, involuntary sounds, such as throat clearing and sniffing, or tics of the limbs may be the initial signs. For some, the disorder begins abruptly with multiple symptoms of movements and sounds.

TS affects more boys than girls (4 to 1). The tics usually start between the ages of 4 to 7. The tics usually reach a peak between ages 10 to 12 and then after puberty tend to remit so that by adulthood about 50% of patients have a substantial improvement.

Many people with TS have yet to be diagnosed, there are no absolute figures. Recent studies suggest that the figure may be one in one hundred when those with chronic and transient tics are included in the count.

At this point in time, there is no cure for TS. Remission can occur at any time. Present data suggests that the tic symptoms tend to stabilize and become less severe in adult life. Those diagnosed with TS can anticipate a normal life span.

**Information taken from the Tourette Syndrome Foundation of Canada <http://www.tourette.ca/index.php> as well as from information provided by Dr. Tamara Pringsheim from the University of Calgary

BACKGROUNDER