



# All about tics: for caregivers

## What are tics?



**Tics are involuntary, repetitive movements and vocalisations.**

- **Motor tics** include eye blinking, shoulder shrugging, facial twitching.
- **Vocal tics** include throat clearing, grunting or humming.
- **Tourette's syndrome** is a condition where an individual has multiple motor tics and a vocal tic for more than a year since onset

## Myths & truths about tics

Myth	Truth
Tics are done on purpose and they can be controlled	Tics may be suppressed temporarily but will occur later. This is similar to suppressing sneezes or hiccups.
Tics are used to avoid homework	Tics cannot be controlled. Stress and anxiety may worsen tics, e.g. when doing homework.

- Currently, the exact cause of tics is unknown but we know that they tend to run in families.
- 30-50% of children that have tics now will not have tics in the future.
- For the rest, tics would wax and wane.
- Tics can become more frequent for children between 8-12 years old and get better in teenage years.



**What causes  
tics? Will tics  
go away?**

## When is intervention and further assessment recommended?

### Most children do not require intervention for tics.



#### Intervention is considered when tics:

- Affect a child's movement or speech
- Affects relationships e.g. bullying
- Affect self esteem
- Affect family life

#### Further assessment when

Co-occurring developmental or mental health condition is suspected for e.g.

- ADHD
- anxiety disorder
- depressive disorder

#### Further interventions include

- Referral to psychologist to help manage tics and its triggers
- Referral to doctors who prescribe medications for tics (and co-occurring conditions)

#### Ignore tics when mild

- Commenting on tics makes them worse
- Take a break or change activities if tics worsen
- When needed, find a safe & quiet place for your child to perform tics



#### Monitor what makes tics worse

- Common causes include stress, anxiety, fatigue or insufficient sleep
- Managing stress by balancing work and relaxation.
- Deep breathing exercises when anxious
- Adequate sleep to help prevent fatigue
- Inform your child's school teacher and help them understand tics better

Age	Sleep duration recommended
3-5 years	10-13 hours (include naps)
6-12 years	9-12 hours
13-18 years	8-10 hours

## How can I help my child manage tics?

## How do I tell others about tics?



#### Find your way to tell others about tics

- For parents and older children this helps others understand tics better and reduces misconceptions about tics.
- This is an example. "Tics are movements or sounds that I make which I cannot fully control. Think of it like a sneeze, hiccup or a yawn."

Information jointly provided by

- Paediatric Adolescent Wellness Service
- Neurology Service
- Psychology Service
- Department of Child Development
- Child and Adolescent Mental Wellness Service



Tic info