

Diagnostic Criteria for Tourette's Disorder

The diagnosis of Tourette's Disorder according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed. for Tourette's syndrome is as follows:

Both multiple motor tics and one or more vocal tics must be present at the same time, although not necessarily concurrently;

The tics must occur many times a day (usually in bouts) nearly every day or intermittently over more than 1 year, during which time there must not have been a tic-free period of more than 3 consecutive months;

The age of onset must be less than 18 years;

The disturbance must not be due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g. stimulants) or a general medical condition (e.g. Huntington's disease or postviral encephalitis).

For many individuals the tics whether they are motor, vocal, or behavioral or a combination thereof cause significant stress and impairment in most aspects of their life. The location, number, frequency, complexity, and severity of the tics change over time. Motor tics usually involve the movement of the head and upper body and quite frequently other parts of the body such as movements in the arms and the legs.

Vocal tics usually include various words or sounds such as making clicking noises, grunting noises, sniffing, snorting, or coughing. At times, many patients have been observed using Coprolalia, a complex vocal tic involving the uttering of obscenities. However, this is usually seen in less than 10% of individuals with Tourette's syndrome. Complex motor tics involve touching, bending of the knees, retracing their steps, twirling around, squatting down.

Usually the first symptoms observed in more than half of the individuals diagnosed with Tourette's involve a bout of a single tic. Most commonly this is seen as eye blinking and less often it involves other movements of the face. Early symptoms may also include tongue protrusion, squatting, clearing of the throat, stuttering, and uttering certain sounds.

The disorder has been widely reported and is diverse in ethnic groups and races. This particular disorder is approximately 1.5-3 times more common in males than in females. Tourette's Disorder occurs in approximately 4-5 individuals per 10,000.

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