Tourette syndrome: GP information sheet

Tourette syndrome involves tics, which are sudden movements or sounds that a person does not choose to make. Tics can come and go, and change over time. Each person's experience is different, and support is available.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

Movement tics

- Blinking, shrugging or facial movements
- Some movements may be more complex
- Tics might change over time

Sound tics

- Sniffing, throat clearing or humming
- Sometimes words or phrases
- Tics may come and go

The feeling before

- Some people may feel an urge before a tic
- Holding tics in might feel tiring
- Tics could increase after a long day

At school or work

- Tics might draw attention
- Concentration may be affected
- Understanding from others can help

Feelings

- People might feel self conscious
- Some may also notice worry or focus difficulties
- Stress or excitement could affect tics

For families

- Families may want to understand more
- Siblings might have questions
- Strengths are part of the picture too

What the person might be bringing

Families may come with worry, curiosity or questions about what tics mean. Children might feel embarrassed, especially if others have commented.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel safer to talk. Feeling heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs already do well

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person a family talks to. A gentle opening can help them share what they have noticed.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

As people explore their options, the GP can remain a familiar, steady presence, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of someone's health and wellbeing, which can help families feel understood.

What psychology may offer

Understanding

- Time to make sense of experiences
- Learning about tics together
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- Space to talk about worry or focus

Practical and family support

- Behavioural approaches for tics
- Support with school and friendships
- Support for parents, carers and families
- Working alongside the GP and other professionals

Everyday things some people find helpful

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Regular sleep
- Calm, low pressure environments
- Explaining tics to teachers and friends
- Time for enjoyable activities
- Relaxation and rest
- Connecting with others who understand

Trusted Australian resources

Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia tourette.org.au

Raising Children Network raisingchildren.net.au

Medicare Mental Health medicarementalhealth.gov.au

Referring to Strategic Psychology

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.