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## Facial tics

A facial tic is a repeated spasm, often involving the eyes and muscles of the face.

### Causes

Tics most often occur in children, but may last into adulthood. Tics occur 3 to 4 times as often in boys as girls. Tics may affect as many as one quarter of all children at some time.

The cause of tics is unknown, but stress appears to make tics worse.

Short-lived tics (transient tic disorder) are common in childhood.

A chronic motor tic disorder also exists. It may last for years. This form is very rare compared to the common short-lived childhood tic. Tourette syndrome is a separate condition in which tics are a major symptom.

### Symptoms

Tics may involve repeated, uncontrolled spasm-like muscle movements, such as:

- Eye blinking
- Grimacing
- Mouth twitching
- Nose wrinkling
- Squinting

Repeated throat clearing or grunting may also be present.

### Exams and Tests

Your health care provider will usually diagnose a tic during a physical examination. No special tests are needed. In rare cases, an electroencephalogram (EEG) may be done to look for seizures, which can be the cause of tics.

### Treatment

Short-lived childhood tics are usually not treated. Calling the child's attention to a tic may make it worse or cause it to continue. A non-stressful environment can make tics occur less often, and help them go away more quickly. Stress reduction programs or cognitive behavioral intervention may also be helpful.

If tics severely affect a person's life, medicines may help control them.

## Outlook (Prognosis)

Simple childhood tics should go away on their own over a period of months. Chronic tics may continue for a longer period of time.

## Possible Complications

In most cases, there are no complications.

## When to Contact a Medical Professional

Make an appointment with your provider if tics:

- Affect many muscle groups
- Are persistent
- Are severe

## Prevention

Many cases cannot be prevented. Reducing stress may be helpful. Sometimes, counseling can help your child learn how to cope with stress.

## Alternative Names

Tic - facial; Mimic spasm

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