



# ASK THE M.A.B. THE

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## Can stimulant medications used in the treatment of ADHD either cause Tourette Syndrome or worsen TS symptoms?

The misconception that stimulant medications cause Tourette Syndrome arose because, typically, the symptoms of inattention and hyperactivity often begin about a year before the onset of tics. Therefore frequently stimulant treatment is prescribed some months before the onset of tics. In the past, this sequence of events created the mistaken impression that there is a causal connection between taking stimulants and the onset of tics. Often careful medical history reveals that mild tics were actually present before treatment with stimulants was begun. In addition, studies of identical twins where only one twin was exposed to stimulants have shown that the second twin, who was not treated with stimulants, developed tics. In summary, the evidence shows that stimulants do not cause tics.

How do stimulants impact tic severity? Completed a couple of years ago a large study has found that stimulant treatment did not increase symptoms and that in fact in some individuals the tics in fact decreased after the stimulant treatment was begun. Although stimulants may worsen TS symptoms in some individuals, for a majority of TS patients they do not cause significant worsening of tics, the exacerbation

is short lived, and therefore they can be taken safely and with good effect for those with ADHD symptoms.

## Typically, when do TS symptoms begin? Are there cases that occur in very young children or older teens?

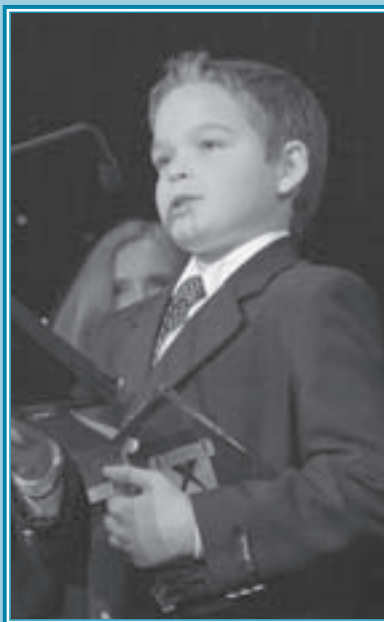
In the majority of cases, tics emerge around age 6 or 7. There is a second, smaller cluster of cases that begin in the pre-pubertal period around age 11 or 12. However, TS symptoms can appear at any time before age 18 and as early as age 1 or 2. When symptoms appear to begin in older teens, it is possible that milder tics were present at a younger age, but no one noticed them until they became more pronounced at a later age. The medical consensus is that one criterion for a diagnosis is that tics begin before age 18. This is because the experience shows that almost all cases of TS begin before that age. Only rarely does someone present with new onset of tics after age 18 and in such cases often when a detailed medical history is taken it is confirmed that mild tics were present before age 18.

## How do we know the difference between an obsessive-compulsive symptom and a complex tic?

Sometimes even physician experts find it difficult to make this distinction. In general, compulsions occur in response to an irrational fear of a dreaded event, e.g., "I must not step on the cracks in the pavement because if I do, something bad will happen to my parents." In contrast, complex tics are expressed until a feeling of "just right" can be achieved, e.g., having to repeatedly put a mug down on a table until it makes just the right sound. Failing to achieve the "just right" feeling leads to an inner discomfort that is difficult to describe. This is different from a clearly formulated anxiety about some dreaded future consequence unless a certain compulsion is performed. However, there are complex behaviors which straddle the divide between obsessive-compulsive symptoms and complex tics, e.g., the need to turn the electric switch precisely three times or a multiple of three as opposed to any other number of repetitions in order to achieve a sense of well being.

## LEAVE A LEGACY FOR TSA

As the year comes to an end, it's time to give thought to financial matters including estate planning. Consider TSA's Legacy Society as a part of these plans. Whether a bequest, policy of insurance, charitable annuity or trust, or, in some instances, a gift of real property, your gift will both help assure TSA future and, through tax benefits in accordance with IRS regulations, provide income for your heirs. Call Mark Levine in the Development Office for more information at 718-224-2999, ext 230.



Photograph by Tony Maddox

On October 15, "I Have Tourette's but Tourette's Doesn't Have Me" received a Media Access Award, which recognizes those who use the unique power of their medium to increase public awareness and understanding.

Accepting the award for HBO was William Coulter, one of the children featured in the documentary. In his acceptance speech, he said, "Having TS has limitations and limitations are like a wall. You can decide if you want to climb it. For example, most people have 5 pages of homework and people with TS have 20 pages...it's more work but in the end you are smarter."

This the fifth award for the documentary, which also won a Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Children's Program, a Parents' Choice Award, a Voice Award from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and a Clarion Award from The Association for Women in Communications.

