

# How to Help Children with Tourette Syndrome

## “Caring for Children’s Mental Health Parent Education Series

Education Bureau 2022

### What is “Tourette Syndrome” (TS)?

TS is a neurodevelopmental disorder. Muscles of people with TS will have sudden, brief, repetitive and involuntary tics, which are mainly classified as motor tics (such as blinking, shrugging and shaking the head) and vocal tics (such as grunting, throat clearing and sudden uttering words).

People with TS usually develop the above symptoms in early childhood. The tics may have the following impacts on their daily life:

- Physical fatigue or pain
- Difficulty in concentrating on learning
- Difficulty in writing, especially when prolonged period of writing is required
- Social difficulties
- Low self-image
- Emotional disturbance
- The tics condition may get worse in times of stress and tension

### Role of Parents

#### If I suspect that my child has TS, I should...

- Seek psychiatric consultation and assessment for my child as early as possible, so that appropriate treatment and support training can be arranged for him/her
- Initiate contact with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), class teacher, the School Guidance Team or school social worker for arrangement of appropriate support services

#### After my child has been assessed as having TS, I should...

- Cooperate with healthcare professionals in undertaking the suggested treatment plan to make sure that my child receives the treatments he/she needs and takes medication as prescribed (if applicable)
- Take the initiative to provide the school with the information about my child’s special educational needs as early as possible, including passing his/her psychiatric report to the school for arrangement of appropriate support services
- Maintain communication with the School Guidance Team or school social worker, SENCO, Student Support Team, class teacher and subject teachers to understand my child’s learning and adjustment condition; and jointly discuss appropriate support strategies if necessary

### The following strategies may be considered when supporting your child:

#### Positive Management of the Illness

- Guide your child to face the tic behaviours with a positive attitude, such as looking up relevant information with your child to deepen their understanding of Tourette Syndrome and help him/her adapt to and accept his/her conditions
- Teach your child to help others understand his/her conditions to help them integrate into the community. For example, how to explain his/her tic behaviours to others

#### Emotion Management

- Teach your child appropriate ways to handle his/her emotions, such as deep breathing or body relaxation exercises, etc.
- Work out a realistic and practical schedule with your child, so that learning, rest and activities can be carried out alternately to relieve nervousness

#### Learning Support and Adjustment

- Depending on the condition of your child’s tic behaviours, assist him/her to divide work into smaller tasks and complete the divided tasks one at a time. For instance, arrange less work to be completed when the tics are frequent
- Assist your child to understand the functions of classroom and assessment accommodations, and encourage him/her to express his/her opinions to teachers in the process of deciding the relevant arrangements

#### Building Self-confidence

- Explore your child's interests and strengths to help him/her develop his/her potentials

### **Support Measures and Strategies**

In general, schools may provide the following support according to the needs of individual students:

#### **Helping the Student on School Adjustment**

- When the student feels very nervous and stressful, let him/her rest and relax in a safe and quiet place
- Arrange preferential seating in places including classrooms and special rooms
- Allow the student participate in class activities according to his/her capabilities and condition to avoid putting him/her under too much pressure
- Provide group or individual training for the student in need to improve his/her social and emotion management skills, and avoid setting "reducing the frequency of tics" as the training goal for him/her

#### **Helping the Student Get Along and Communicate with Teachers and Peers**

- Actively cultivate a caring school culture. Increase teachers' and students' understanding of TS to facilitate acceptance of students with TS with an inclusive attitude
- Model to his/her classmates how to respond to the tics of the student with TS appropriately
- Accept and deliberately ignore the student's tics so as to reduce his/her stress and anxiety
- Arrange some helpful peers to provide learning or emotion support in class for the student
- Promote interaction between the student and his/her peers, such as arranging peer-mediated play groups

#### **Engaging the Student in Learning Activities**

- Adopt teaching strategies such as breaking tasks into smaller steps and highlighting key points
- Provide teaching notes for the student in need
- Train the student in need to use computer typing instead of writing
- Provide homework accommodations according to the student's needs to reduce his/her pressure
- Provide special examination arrangements according to the students' needs and suggestions from professionals

#### **Strengthening Support and Home-School Cooperation**

- Provide intensive support services to students with serious difficulties as needed, such as formulating an Individual Learning Plan, conducting regular reviews and follow-up
- Maintain close collaboration and communication among the school, parents and professionals (such as healthcare professionals, social workers, psychologists, etc.)

### **Useful Websites**

#### **Education Bureau**

Homepage of the Education Bureau

<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

"SENSE" Integrated Education and Special Education Information Online Information

<https://sense.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

"Mental Health @School" Student Mental Health Information Online

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>

Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education

[https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/download-area-and-related-links/ie\\_guide\\_en.pdf](https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/integrated-education/download-area-and-related-links/ie_guide_en.pdf)

Teacher's Resource Handbook on Understanding and Supporting Students with Mental Illness

[https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/types-of-special-educational-needs/mental-illness/Teacher's\\_Resource\\_Handbook\\_on\\_Understanding\\_and\\_Supporting\\_Students\\_with\\_Mental\\_Illness\\_\(August%202017\).pdf](https://sense.edb.gov.hk/uploads/page/types-of-special-educational-needs/mental-illness/Teacher's_Resource_Handbook_on_Understanding_and_Supporting_Students_with_Mental_Illness_(August%202017).pdf)

#### **Department of Health**

Child Assessment Service

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/>

Student Health Service

<https://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/eindex.html>

**Social Welfare Department**

<https://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/>

**The Hong Kong Council of Social Service**

<https://www.hkcss.org.hk/?lang=en>

**Telephone Numbers for Enquiry**

**Education Bureau**

General enquiries about special education 3698 3957

**Hospital Authority**

Hospital Authority Mental Health Direct (24 hours) 2466 7350

**Department of Health**

Child Assessment Service 2246 6659

Student Health Service 2349 4212

**Community Resources and Helplines**

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/early-identification-at-the-selective-level/helplines-and-community-resources.html>