What Is Tardive Dyskinesia?

Tardive dyskinesia (TD) is a condition that causes your face, your body or both to make sudden, irregular movements that you can’t control. **Tardive** means delayed or appearing late and **dyskinesia** means uncontrolled, involuntary movements. TD may develop a few months to many years after taking certain medications.

The medications that may cause TD include antipsychotic and neuroleptic drugs that are commonly used to treat mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder and depression. In addition, other medications used to treat nausea and vomiting may also trigger TD. These medications help control dopamine – a chemical in the brain that plays a role in many body functions including movement and the regulation of feelings of pleasure, reward and motivation. Too much dopamine signaling in the brain is believed to cause TD.1

What Are the Symptoms of TD?

TD causes uncontrolled, jerky movements that can be fast or slow. In some cases, people with TD find it difficult to work and participate in physical activities.

The symptoms of TD can include:

- **Dyskinesia of your face, jaw, lips or tongue**
  - Blinking your eyes.
  - Frowning.
  - Sticking out your tongue.
  - Smacking your lips.
  - Chewing.
  - Puffing out your cheeks.

- **Dyskinesia of your arms, legs, fingers, and toes**
  - Tapping your feet.
  - Wiggling your fingers.
  - Flapping your arms.
  - Swaying from side to side.
  - Thrusting your pelvis.

How Common Is TD?

An estimated 16% to 50% of people who have taken certain mental health medications may develop the uncontrollable movements of TD.1

- TD affects about 600,000 people in the U.S.,2 which is approximately two-tenths of one percent of the population.

TD can affect people of all ages, genders and races, but the risk of developing TD can be higher for certain people:

- Older adults.3
- Women.4
- People who have a substance use disorder.5
- People of African descent.6

How Is TD Diagnosed?

Only a healthcare provider can diagnose TD. That’s why it’s important to get checked regularly for drug-induced movement disorders like TD if you take mental health medications. This would include having a visual examination of your body by a healthcare provider using a physical assessment tool like the Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale.

An early diagnosis of TD means you’ll get started promptly on the right treatment plan,
A treatment plan combined with self-care can help you effectively manage TD.

For more information about TD:

MedlinePlus: Movement Disorders  
[medlineplus.gov/movementdisorders.html](medlineplus.gov/movementdisorders.html)

National Organization for Tardive Dyskinesia  
[tdhelp.org](tdhelp.org)

Rare Diseases: Tardive Dyskinesia  
[rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/tardive-dyskinesia](rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/tardive-dyskinesia)

Zoom TD Support Groups/National Organization for Tardive Dyskinesia  
[tdhelp.org/zoom-td-support-groups](tdhelp.org/zoom-td-support-groups)

References:


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For mental health and suicide prevention information and resources, visit the Rural Mental Health Resilience Program website at [www.RuralMinds.org/resilience](www.RuralMinds.org/resilience) or via the QR code below:

![QR Code](https://example.com/qr-code.png)

In crisis? Call or text 988

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which may help lessen the severity of the TD symptoms.7

How Is TD Treated?

If you develop symptoms of TD, talk to your healthcare provider. Your provider may change your medication or prescribe another medication that can help improve TD symptoms. Be sure to talk to your healthcare provider first before you stop taking any medications.

Not only does TD have a physical impact on you, but it also can also be emotionally and socially troubling for you and your family.

How can you be proactive in managing your TD?

- Regularly get your TD symptoms checked by a healthcare provider.
- Keep track of your TD symptoms and let your healthcare provider know about any new symptoms.
- Take good care of yourself by exercising, eating a well-balanced diet and getting adequate sleep.