



TIPS

Tardive dyskinesia is a movement disorder characterized by repetitive, involuntary muscle tics. These movements may occur occasionally or constantly. There is no cure for tardive dyskinesia, but the following tips can help if you have this disorder.

Inquire about side effects. Tardive dyskinesia is caused by the long-term use of neuroleptic drugs. When your doctor prescribes a new drug to treat a mental health disorder, ask about its side effects. The benefits of the drug should outweigh the risks.

Aid in prevention. The most effective treatment for tardive dyskinesia is prevention. If you are taking neuroleptic medication, see your doctor for regular evaluations to ensure that any signs of tardive dyskinesia are recognized before they become severe.

Know the symptoms. Symptoms of tardive dyskinesia include grimacing, tongue protrusion, lip smacking, sucking or chewing movements, and rapid eye blinking. The arms or legs also may be affected by involuntary rapid, jerking movements or slow, writhing movements.

Receive a thorough examination. When visiting your doctor, you also can be tested to see if you have another disorder that causes abnormal movements (eg, cerebral palsy, Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, stroke, or Tourette's syndrome).

Continue taking your medication. If you notice movement problems, tell your doctor. Never stop taking the prescribed drug on your own. Your doctor can take you off the medicine that caused the movements, or lower the dosage.

Consider other treatment options. Substitute drugs may be recommended to replace your current neuroleptics. Drugs that might ease movement disorders include amantadine, clonazepam, and tetrabenazine.

Keep abreast of treatment goals. The goal of treating tardive dyskinesia is to keep movements as normal as possible, with the smallest amount of medication. However, not everyone who takes drugs that can cause tardive dyskinesia will develop this disorder.

Reduce environmental stressors. Your tardive dyskinesia can worsen under stress, so reducing environmental stressors is important. For some people, talk therapy, taking a yoga class, or lighting an aromatherapy candle can help relieve stress.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.

