

# NYU CHILD STUDY CENTER

CHANGING THE FACE OF CHILD MENTAL HEALTH

DECEMBER 2005

*This monthly newsletter provides parenting and mental health information as well as upcoming events and programs by the NYU Child Study Center.*

## ASK THE EXPERT: TICS AND TOURETTE'S DISORDER

*Barbara Coffey, M.D., M.S., Director of the Institute for Tourette's and Movement Disorders at the NYU Child Study Center answers frequently asked questions about Tourette's and tics.*

### **Q: What are tic disorders and Tourette's Disorder (TD) (also known as Tourette Syndrome)?**

**A:** Tics are neurobiologically based involuntary, rapid, recurrent muscle movements and/or vocalizations. Tic disorders are common in youth, and are classified as either transient (lasting more than 4 weeks but less than a year) or chronic (lasting greater than one year). TD is the most complex of the chronic tic disorders, and is characterized by multiple motor and vocal tics lasting greater than one year.

### **Q: What are the most common symptoms of TD?**

**A:** Tics typically begin by around age 6-7 years; often motor tics precede vocal tics. TD symptoms usually emerge between 5 and 18 years of age. TD symptoms change periodically in number, frequency, type and severity over time. Common motor tics include eye blinking, shoulder shrugging, and facial grimacing. Common vocal tics include throat clearing, coughing and sniffing.

### **Q: What is the cause of TD?**

**A:** No definite cause has yet been established, but considerable evidence points to disinhibition of several pathways in the brain connecting muscular movement, vocalization, cognitive and emotional functions.

### **Q: Is TD inherited?**

**A:** Genetic studies indicate that TD is inherited, although the exact gene or genes are not known. Family members with a child with TD may be affected by obsessive-compulsive symptoms or disorder (OCD).

### **Q: How are tic disorders and TD diagnosed?**

**A:** Diagnosis is made by evaluation of the history of onset of symptoms and by observation. TD is not diagnosed by laboratory work such as blood tests, X-rays, EEG or MRI.

### **Q: How many people are affected with tic disorders or TD?**

**A:** Up to 20-25% of children may be diagnosed with a tic disorder, most often in the school age period. TD is less common, but may affect up to 4% of school age children. Males are more often affected than females. All races and ethnic groups are affected.

### **Q: How are tic disorders treated?**

**A:** Medication is the treatment of choice for management of symptoms. Individuals respond differently to the various types of medications, and frequently it takes some time until the optimal treatment for each individual is achieved. Almost all of medications commonly prescribed for TD treatment do not have a specific Federal Drug Administration indication for the disorder.

### **Q: Is there a remission?**

**A:** Many people with TS get better, not worse, as they mature. In a small minority of cases symptoms remit completely in adulthood.

### **Q: Does the Child Study Center offer programs for children with TD and tics?**

**A:** The Institute for Tourette's and Movement Disorders is dedicated exclusively to the treatment and study of tics, Tourette's and movement disorders and co-occurring disorders. Clinical services in the Institute include comprehensive evaluation, consultation and treatment for children and adolescents with tics, Tourette's Disorder and related problems. The research component of the Institute focuses on the natural history, course, and clinical phenomenology of Tourette's and tic disorders, pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders with streptococcus (PANDAS), and the relationship between tics and other psychiatric disorders. Several treatment studies using new medications are ongoing. For more information about clinical research studies, please call (212) 263-8992.

For more information about services at the Institute, call (212) 263-8916.



To be added to or unsubscribe from our mailing list, please contact [csc-communications@med.nyu.edu](mailto:csc-communications@med.nyu.edu)

In addition to our clinical services for children and adolescents, the Center offers a variety of programs and services for parents, educators and mental health professionals:

- **ADHD Institute Family Education Series**  
This series of workshops is designed to help parents and other family members better understand their child's diagnosis of ADHD and learn more about the most current, evidence-based treatments and interventions. For more information, call (212) 263-8915, or e-mail [ADHD@AboutOurKids.org](mailto:ADHD@AboutOurKids.org).
- **The Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Foundation Lecture Series: *Advanced Seminars for School Professionals***  
This series of free professional development seminars will provide school-based practitioners updates on recent advances in children's mental health. To register, e-mail [nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu](mailto:nyuschoolpartnership@med.nyu.edu) or call (212) 263-2744. Upcoming lecture: Autism Spectrum Disorder, January 11, 2006.
- **About Our Kids: Parenting Workshops for parents of anxious children with tics or Tourette's Disorder.**  
The goal of the workshop is to teach parents of children with tics and Tourette's to help their children cope effectively in situations that trigger anxiety. Over time, your children will learn to manage and overcome their worries independently, and will no longer avoid the things that previously worried them. For more information, contact (212) 263-8916.

#### Current Clinical Studies:

- We are recruiting **teenagers, between 12-18 years of age, who are currently experiencing symptoms of depression** and who have attempted suicide within the past 90 days. The immediate and long-lasting benefits of three treatments are being evaluated to determine which is most effective in reducing suicidal behaviors and depressive symptoms. All study visits, evaluations, and therapy sessions are provided at **no cost**. For more information, please contact Dr. Barbara Coffey at (212) 263-3926 or Dr. Lori Evans at (212) 263-3661.
- The NYU Child Study Center is currently evaluating **children and adolescents ages 7-18 with tic disorders or Tourette's Disorder** to determine if they qualify to participate in a research study and receive specialized, professional care at **no cost**. For more information please call Rachel Shechter 212-263-3654.
- **Brain imaging study for adolescents with ADHD and/or Autism Spectrum Disorders.** This study examines structural brain differences in adolescents with ADHD, those with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and typically developing children. We are looking for **teens between 12 and 17 years of age** who have symptoms of ADHD (hyperactivity, impulsivity, and trouble paying attention), or symptoms related to Autism (difficulty making friends and poor communication skills), **or children without any of these symptoms** (controls). For more information, please contact Snigdha Rathor at (212) 263-8911 or [snigdha.rathor@med.nyu.edu](mailto:snigdha.rathor@med.nyu.edu).

## Events Calendar

### **New Mothers: New Lives**

*Educational Support Group for New Mothers  
Open to mothers and babies, 0-9months*

#### **When: Thursdays**

Continuous Open Enrollment

Where: NYU Child Study Center

577 First Avenue

Multipurpose Room

Time: 1:00-2:15 pm

Contact: (212) 263-3927

### **ADHD Parenting Workshops**

*Homework Helper: The parent as executive secretary or "How many pairs of mittens have we replaced?"*

#### **When: December 15, 2005**

Where: NYU Child Study Center

577 First Avenue

Time: 6:00-7:30 pm

Cost: \$15 per family

Contact: (212) 263-8696

### **Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Foundation Lecture Series**

*Autism Spectrum Disorders*

#### **When: Wednesday, January 11, 2006**

Where: NYU Child Study Center

215 Lexington Avenue

Time: 4:15 pm-6:30 pm

Cost: Free

Contact: (212) 263-2744

### **Sunny and Abe Rosenberg Foundation Lecture Series**

*Classroom Interventions for Children with ADHD*

#### **When: Wednesday, February 8, 2006**

Where: The Dalton School

108 East 89<sup>th</sup> Street

Time: 4:15 pm -6:30 pm

Cost: Free

Contact: (212) 263-2744

For more information on Child Study Center events, please visit [AboutOurKids.org](http://AboutOurKids.org)