

## What is Essential tremor?

A tremor is when a muscle contracts and cannot be controlled. It causes shaking movements of one or more parts of the body. It is a nerve condition. It affects each person differently.

## What should I know?

- Essential Tremor is the most common kind of movement disorder.
- Tremors can be mistaken as other diseases, like Parkinson Disease.
- Other names are benign essential tremor or familial tremor.
- The tremor may begin slowly and worsen over time.
- The tremor is more obvious with movement, and happens less with rest.
- Tremors may affect each side of the body differently.
- Stress, caffeine, and certain medicines can make tremors worse.

## What causes Essential tremor?

The causes of Essential Tremors are not known. For some people, it may be a gene that was passed to them from their parents.

Essential Tremor happens in children for different reasons:

- One kind is called Familial Essential Tremor: if one parent has Essential Tremor, their child has a 50% chance of having the gene that causes Essential Tremor.
- These tremors can be made worse by some medicines. Keep a list of your child's medicines and when the dose of any of them is changed. This may help to figure out if a medicine is making the symptoms worse.
- Tremors can be caused by other conditions as well. A medical provider may order blood tests or make sure another disorder is not causing or worsening a tremor.

## What are the symptoms?

- Repetitive shaking of hands, arms, chest and back, legs or feet.
- Head-nodding that can be uncontrollable.
- Voice change. The voice may sound shaky or quivering.
- Problems writing with a pen or pencil, holding a cup or using a spoon.

## Living with ET

Essential tremors are usually not dangerous to live with, but they can be very frustrating. Remember that things like caffeine, stress, and certain drugs, will make the tremors worse. Try to avoid them. Relaxing by doing like yoga, deep breathing, or biofeedback can be helpful to control the tremor.

In severe cases of essential tremor, physical therapy, occupational therapy and adaptive devices can help to improve quality of life.

## How is it treated?

Some people may not need treatment if their tremor is mild. Medicine may be needed for more severe symptoms. Some medicines work better than others.

Some examples are:

- Propranolol: This medicine is most widely used for tremors. More than half of patients who use it get some relief.
- Primidone: This medicine has helped treat some patients with tremors. It is not often used because of side effects.
- Other options include:
  - Levetiracetam, Topiramate, or Gabapentin
  - Alprazolam
  - Atenolol or Sotalol

Your doctor will help you decide which medicine may be helpful.

## More information and supporting organizations

- National Institute of Health: <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/All-Disorders/Essential-Tremor-Information-Page>
- International Essential Tremor Foundation: <https://www.essentialtremor.org>
- Movement Disorder Society: <http://www.movementdisorders.org>

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse or clinic if you or your child have any concerns or your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

**This document was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**