22% of preschool children, 8% of primary school students and 3% of adolescents have tics


QUESTION: What is the prevalence of tics in a community sample of children? What is the relationship between tics and psychiatric symptoms?

Design
Cross sectional study.

Setting
12 preschools and 16 public elementary and secondary schools in Missouri, Wisconsin and New York, USA.

Participants
3006 school children; 413 aged 3–5 years, 1520 aged 5–12 years and 1073 aged 12–18 years.

Main outcome measures
A teacher-rated DSM-IV referenced scale was used to assess tics and other psychiatric symptoms. Children were classified into 4 groups: 1) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with tics; 2) ADHD without tics; 3) tics without ADHD, and 4) neither ADHD nor tics.

Main results
22% of preschool children, 8% of 5–12 year olds and 3% of adolescents had tics (table). Tics were more common in males, regardless of comorbid ADHD symptoms (p < 0.05). Obsessive-compulsive, simple and social phobia symptoms were more common in children with tics (all p < 0.05).

Conclusions
Studies of the prevalence and psychiatric comorbidity of chronic tic disorder have been conducted largely with children referred to tic disorder clinics. This study found similar prevalence and comorbidity rates in a community sample.