

DYSTONIA

Dystonia is a movement disorder; a person who has it experiences involuntary muscle contractions that cause twisting or jerking movements that are often repeated in a pattern. Dystonia might affect a single muscle, a group of muscles, or all of a person's muscles. It occurs in multiple forms, and it might be a symptom of a neurological or metabolic disorder.

MANIFESTATIONS

Dystonia can show up at any age. It can manifest itself in many ways:

Cervical dystonia or torticollis: Contractions of the neck muscles cause head turning, tilting or twisting, along with shaking or jerking movements.

Meige syndrome, including contractions of face muscles that cause excessive blinking or eye spasms (blepharospasm) or spasms of the jaw and/or tongue (oromandibular dystonia).

Spasmodic dysphonia causes a strained or breathy voice.

Task-specific dystonias occur only during a repetitive activity such as writing or playing a musical instrument.

CAUSES AND DIAGNOSIS

Researchers say dystonia might result from abnormality in or damage to parts of the brain that control movement. It can have no clear cause, or it might be genetic. Additionally, it can show up as a result of

an injury or infection, or as a reaction to medication, poisoning, trauma, or stroke.

Healthcare providers try to determine the age at which dystonia started; the areas of the body that are affected; whether the dystonia started suddenly or appears to be getting worse; and whether there are other neurological disorders that might be related.

TREATMENT

Medications, injections or surgery might be options for treating dystonia, depending on the cause. Trial and error might play a significant role in finding what works best.

MORE INFORMATION

The UK Movement Disorders Clinic specializes in the evaluation and treatment of disorders of gait, coordination and other aspects of movement, including dystonia.
ukhealthcare.uky.edu/kni/movement
859-323-5661

Dystonia Medical Research Foundation
www.dystonia-foundation.org

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
www.ninds.nih.gov/Disorders/Patient-Caregiver-Education

International Parkinson and Movement Disorders Society
www.movementdisorders.org