



Essential Tremor (ET)

# Facts about Essential Tremor

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## **ET is a neurological condition that causes shaking of the hands, head, and voice.**

- ET can also cause legs and torso to shake, and some people have a feeling of internal tremor.
- An estimated 10 million Americans have ET.
- Although there are many possible causes of tremor, ET is the most common. Still, misdiagnosis of tremor is a problem. According to the *Canadian Journal of Neuroscience*, general neurologists treating tremor have a diagnostic error rate of 25% to 35%.
- ET is often misdiagnosed as Parkinson's disease, yet according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, eight times as many people have ET as have Parkinson's.
- ET is not confined to the elderly. Children and middle-aged people can also develop ET. In fact, newborns have been diagnosed with the condition.
- There is evidence that ET is genetic. Each child of

a parent who has ET has a 50% chance of inheriting a gene that causes the condition. However, sometimes people with no family history of tremor develop ET.

- Few effective prescription medications are available for treating ET. Unfortunately, it is estimated that less than 60% of people with ET are helped by these medications.
- Researchers estimate that 4% to 5% of people age(s) 40 to 60 have ET. The incidence rate for people age 60 and older is estimated at 6.3% to 9%.
- People who have ET become disabled at worst and feel frustrated or embarrassed at best.
- Quality of life is a big issue for people with ET. Daily activities such as eating, drinking, grooming and writing become difficult, if not impossible.
- Many people with ET are too embarrassed to go out in public and remain isolated in their homes, which can lead to depression.

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**Diagnosing ET** - While there are no medical tests for ET, a movement disorder specialist can make a diagnosis. The doctor will conduct a neurological examination and evaluate symptoms in order to rule out other potential causes of tremor. To learn more, review our "Patient Handbook."

**When your child has ET** - If you believe your child has ET, he/she should be examined by a pediatric movement disorder specialist. To learn more about children and ET, order the IETF's free guide for parents and teachers "Children with Essential Tremor: A guide for parents and other caring adults."

**Coping with ET** - Order the IETF's free flyer "Essential Tremor Coping Tips." Join an ET support group in your community. Stay connected with the latest information about ET by joining the IETF's mailing list.

Call the IETF (toll free) at 888.387.3667 to request more information or visit our website, [www.essentialtremor.org](http://www.essentialtremor.org).

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The mission of the International Essential Tremor Foundation (IETF) is to provide hope to the essential tremor (ET) community worldwide through awareness, education, support and research.