

Essential Tremor Facts

Essential tremor is a neurological condition that causes a rhythmic trembling of the hands, head, voice, legs or trunk.

- An estimated 10 million Americans have ET and millions more worldwide.
- While trembling of the hands, head, voice, legs or trunk are common in ET, some people have a feeling of internal tremor.
- The cause of ET is currently unknown. It is thought to be related to abnormal functioning of the part of the brain called the cerebellum or a chemical in the brain called GABA.
- 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.