



Communicating Research in Clear Language

The Effects of Aerobic Exercise on Childhood Tourette Syndrome and OCD

What is the research about?

Behavioural therapies and medications are the usual treatments for Tourette Syndrome (TS) and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). Research on exercise for children with depression, ADHD, and anxiety has shown positive effects, so this study was designed to look at whether or not exercise is an effective treatment in children with TS and OCD.

What did the researchers do?

In this pilot study, the researchers recruited 5 children with a confirmed diagnosis of both TS and OCD. The children and their parents filled out questionnaires and took part in interviews about symptoms. As the children followed along with DVDs of twice-weekly, 30-minute aerobic exercise programs, they were observed by trained staff via Skype. During these sessions, the children wore monitors that measured their heart rate to ensure they were exercising at moderate intensity. They were then tested and interviewed again at 2, 4, and 6 weeks after their initial assessment.

What did the researchers find?

This was a small study with 5 children diagnosed with both TS and OCD. Based on objective testing and parent report, all 5 of the children showed significant benefit from the exercise. Their tics and OCD compulsions all diminished during the treatment phase, and most children maintained the benefits after study completion. The parents also reported that the children had improved self-esteem and better sleep.

Take home message

This small study demonstrated that exercise can alleviate the symptoms of children with TS and OCD. The authors stress that given its limitations their study does not provide strong proof of the effectiveness of and recommend that much larger studies should be carried out.

NOTE: The original [Research Report](#) was written by A. M. Abrantes and colleagues and published in *Mental Health and Physical Activity*, 2012.