Dystonia is a brain disorder. It causes uncontrollable body movements and postures. The brain sends chaotic signals to the muscles, telling the muscles to contract, even if the person does not want them to.

**Common symptoms include:**
- Involuntary movements and pain in the neck
- Excessive blinking
- A breathy or strangled-sounding voice
- Slurred speech
- Hand cramps
- A twisted foot

☐ Estimates suggest at least 250,000 adults and children in the USA are affected.

☐ Dystonia can be caused by gene mutations, brain injury, stroke, certain drugs, and other insults to the nervous system.

☐ Most cases of dystonia occur out of the blue, without an obvious cause.

☐ Treatment is available. There is not yet a cure, but researchers around the world are working to better understand dystonia and develop new therapies.

☐ Dystonia is life-changing and can be disabling.

☐ Because dystonia is not better known, dystonia is frequently misdiagnosed. The symptoms are often mistaken for mental health issues, substance abuse, or poor social skills.

☐ The Dystonia Medical Research Foundation (DMRF) is a resource for patients, medical professionals, and researchers. Information is available at [www.dystonia-foundation.org](http://www.dystonia-foundation.org)

*Sharing your dystonia story with other people is a powerful way to promote awareness.*

*Find information about common forms of dystonia on the back of this sheet.*
Common Forms of Dystonia

Symptoms of dystonia do not appear the same in every patient. Dystonia may affect a specific part of the body or many parts simultaneously.

- **Spasmodic Dysphonia/Laryngeal Dystonia**
  Affects muscles of the vocal cords, making it difficult to speak.

- **Oromandibular Dystonia**
  Affects the face, jaw, and/or tongue. Causes grimacing, tongue protrusion, jaw closure, or jaw opening.

- **Limb Dystonia**
  May affect the hand/arm or foot/leg. Causes fingers and toes to curl and limb muscles to cramp.

- **Blepharospasm**
  Affects the eyelids, causing them to blink uncontrollably or remain closed.

- **Cervical Dystonia/Spasmodic Torticollis**
  Affects neck and shoulder muscles, turning the head to the side or forcing the head back or forward. A tremor may be present.

- **Generalized Dystonia**
  Affects many parts of the body simultaneously. Causes cramping and twisting in the feet, limbs, and torso.

- Dystonia may occur with tremor or other movement symptoms.
- Symptoms may be chronic or occur in episodes.
- Dystonia does not affect vital organs such as the heart.
- Individuals with dystonia may experience depression and anxiety disorders.
- There is not yet a cure, but treatment is available.

For more information visit dystonia-foundation.org