

What should I tell my friends?

Because everyone is different, there is no “right” answer about what to say to your friends. However, many people choose to tell them the truth. The truth is that everyone is different, everyone has habits of all kinds, and you happen to pull your hair. Lots of kids have this problem and you are going to learn more about it so that you can stop pulling. Your friends can help by sticking by you and learning that you aren’t doing this on purpose.

How can I meet other kids who have “trich”?

TLC knows a lot of kids who pull their hair. They can help your parents see if there is a kids’ group close to where you live. Also, TLC runs an email group for kids with trich. This way, kids can email each other, share information, and just talk about what it’s like to have trich. One other way to meet kids with trich is at a special meeting called a retreat that TLC holds every year. It lasts for three days and is held in different places around the country. Kids come with their parents, and everyone gets a chance to learn a lot about pulling and picking. The kids get to spend a lot of time together and everyone makes many new friends.



How can I help?

Become a member of TLC.

TLC is the only charity organization in the country that is working to help people who have trich. Being a member of TLC is the best way for you and your parents to get accurate information, stay up to date on what’s new in research and treatment, become part of a caring community, and support TLC’s efforts to improve the lives of people with hair pulling, skin picking and related problems. Only TLC members receive a newsletter that has helpful information for you and your parents, plus your parents get a huge information guide that has the best information on how to help you stop pulling your hair.

Volunteer

Yes, even kids can volunteer to make a difference! TLC knows many kids who teach others about trich. From wearing awareness bracelets to giving a presentation to your class or school, there are a lot of simple things you can do to help other people know that trich is a real problem affecting millions of people.

Where can my parents get more information?

From TLC! TLC has helped over 500,000 adults and children with trichotillomania, skin picking, and related problems, their parents, friends, and families, doctors and therapists, and the media. TLC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, which means that TLC is a charity that works to help others. Here at TLC, we work with the world’s leading scientists and doctors to provide accurate information about trichotillomania and provide a wide range of services to our community. **TLC is here to help! Kids and parents can call or email TLC with questions.**

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TLC trichotillomania
LEARNING CENTER
www.trich.org

I have trichotillomania

(trick o til o may nee ah)

That means I pull out my hair.
It’s a real medical condition that affects millions of kids (and grown-ups).

The good news is, there is help for kids like me.



a kid's guide to frequently asked questions about hair pulling

Tricho-what? Trichotillomania.

What a long word! It is actually from another language, Greek. Tricho (it sounds like tricko) means "hair." Tillo (which sounds just like it looks, tillo) means "pull." And mania (sounds like main-ee-ah) means "a feeling of being out of control." So if we put the whole word together it means, "not being able to stop pulling your hair." The hair could be on your head, your eyelashes, your eyebrows, or really anywhere on your body. One word means all of that! It is such a big word that a lot of times people find it easier to say "trich" (remember it sounds like "trick"). Any way that you say it, it means the same thing!

Ok, so what **IS** trichotillomania?

Trich is a neurobiological disorder (that means a problem related to your nervous system). Doctors and scientists still have a lot to learn about what causes it and how to treat it. No one knows why some people have trich and other people don't. It does seem to run in families, along with problems like picking at skin and biting nails. The doctors have noticed that for many people with this problem,

there is something in the brain that makes hair pulling feel good or relaxing. It seems like the brain sends out a signal to the nervous system that says, "Hey, that felt good. Do it again!" Because of those "good" feelings, hair pulling can become much harder to stop than kicking a "bad habit."



I feel like I am the only one.

Do a lot of other kids have this too?

They sure do! Lots of them. Doctors who study these things figured that out of about every 100 children as many as 3 may have a problem with pulling out their hair. These doctors think that up to 3% of all of the people in America may have problems with hair pulling. That could be as many as 9 million people!! Also, both boys and girls get trich. Sometimes kids feel like they might be the only person in world with this problem. But people from all over the world also get trichotillomania. So you are definitely **not the only one**.

Why do I have trich?

We are not sure why some kids have this and others don't. Scientists and doctors are studying the causes right now. We do know that everybody is different in all sorts of ways. Some kids have blue eyes and others have brown, some kids are tall and others are short, and some kids need braces on their teeth and others don't. Some kids pull their hair while other kids don't. Everybody does at least a little picking, pulling, or biting now and then. It just seems that some people do it a lot more and find it hard to stop. The important thing to remember is that it's not your fault that you do this. It really isn't anyone's fault.

Will it ever go away?

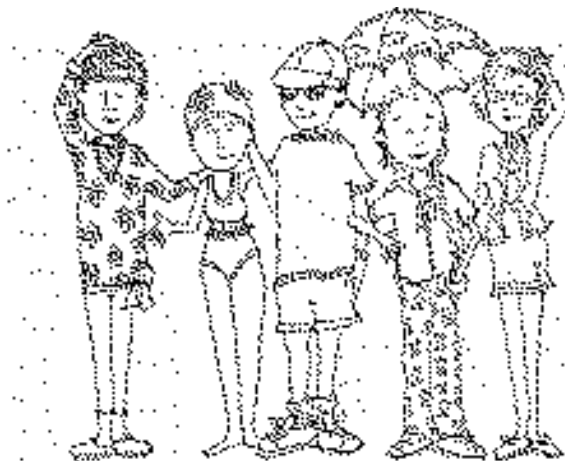
Sometimes trich just goes away. Or it may start and stop at different times in your life. But even if it doesn't stop on its own, there are lots of things that you can do that will help stop it. Lots of kids who used to pull their hair don't pull anymore! You will probably need to learn how to do some very special things to help yourself so that you don't pull your hair.

How can I stop pulling?

Just learning more about your hair pulling can help. Talking about it can also help. When you have trich, your body may need some extra help so that you can stop pulling (just like if you have crooked teeth, you might need to wear braces). Maybe you pull because your head sometimes feels itchy, your fingers like to play with hair, biting the hair or rubbing the hair on your skin feels good, or just because the pulling feels good to you. Your body may need you to do some other things so that your head won't itch so much, and to make your mouth and fingers happy without pulling your hair. This sounds a lot easier than it really is. It takes some work to change any behavior. TLC can direct you to a very helpful workbook and other information to help you figure out what strategies may be the most helpful for you. There are also some special doctors that work with kids to develop ideas to help them to stop pulling their hair!

What are some things I can do to help myself?

To start, it's helpful if you can figure out when you pull the most. Then think of some strategies you



can use during those times. Some kids like to brush their hair with a soft-bristled brush. Others nibble on things like gum, hard candy, sunflower seeds, even raw spaghetti! This helps distract your body by creating other types of sensations.

Other simple tools include wearing band-aids on your fingertips, or gloves on your hands, to create a barrier between your fingers and your hair. You might try getting your hair wet to make it more difficult to pull. And, it's a really good idea to have some fiddle toys around to keep your hands busy: koosh balls and silly putty are really popular with other kids.

What can my parents and family do to help me feel better and also stop pulling?

Lots of things. They can learn more about trich by reading, looking it up on the Internet, and talking to people who know about the problem, such as doctors, and therapists. They can learn more about how to talk to you about your hair pulling. And they can see if they can find a special doctor to help. Sometimes it is really hard to find doctors who know about trich, so your parents may need to find some books to help. The Trichotillomania Learning Center (TLC) has a lot of information and resources that can help you with your trich! TLC also keeps lists of doctors who treat this problem.

What can I do so that my parents won't bug me?

Talk to them. Let them know that you love them and you're not pulling your hair on purpose, no matter how it seems. Tell them that in the same way that it's not your fault that you pull your hair, it's not their fault either. You know that they love you. Everyone in the family needs to find different ways to help each other.