

Cerebral Palsy

Fact Sheet

Cerebral Palsy is:

- a number of disorders of the developing brain that affects body movement, posture and muscle coordination
- caused by damage to one or more specific areas of the brain, usually occurring during fetal development; before, during or shortly after birth; during infancy; or early childhood.
- not a disease, not progressive nor communicable.

The Statistics (United States)

- The United Cerebral Palsy Research and Educational Foundation estimates between 1.5 - 2 million children and adults have cerebral palsy in the United States.
- 10,000 babies and infants are diagnosed with cerebral palsy annually
- 1,200 - 1,500 preschool children are also recognized to have cerebral palsy each year

Types of Cerebral Palsy

- Spastic Cerebral Palsy - Characterized by muscle stiffness and permanent contractions
- Athetoid or Dyskinetic Cerebral Palsy - Characterized by uncontrolled, slow writhing movements
- Ataxic Cerebral Palsy - Characterized by poor coordination and balance

The Effects

A person with cerebral palsy may exhibit one or more of the following effects:

- Muscle tightness or spasticity
- Involuntary movement
- Disturbance in gait or mobility
- Difficulty in swallowing and problems with speech

An individual with cerebral palsy may also exhibit:

- Difficulty in feeding
- Mental retardation
- Impairment of sight, hearing or speech
- Learning difficulties
- Abnormal sensation and perception
- Problems with breathing because of postural difficulties
- Seizures
- Skin disorders because of pressure sores
- Difficulty with bladder and bowel control

The Risk Factors

- Premature birth
- Lack of growth factors during the birthing process
- Low birth weight
- RH blood type incompatibility between mother and infant
- Severe jaundice shortly after birth
- Inability of the placenta to provide the developing fetus
- Bacterial infection of the mother, fetus or infant with oxygen and nutrients
- German measles or other viral diseases in early pregnancy

Is Cerebral Palsy Curable?

At this time, there is no cure for the developmental brain damage that causes cerebral palsy. Training and therapy, however, can help improve muscle function and coordination.

For more information contact:

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