

# Cerebral Palsy

BIRTH DEFECT RESEARCH FOR CHILDREN



## What is Cerebral Palsy?

The word “cerebral” refers to the brain, while “palsy” is used to describe a lack of muscle control. Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a disabling condition that affects a person’s ability to move. Cases can range from mild to severe.



# Cerebral Palsy



How many children are born with Cerebral Palsy?

Approximately 500,000 - 700,000 Americans have some degree of cerebral palsy. That is about 2-3 cases per 1,000 births. Each year around 10,000 babies are born with CP, and another 2,000 acquire it early on in life.

What are the causes of Cerebral Palsy?

Lack of oxygen supply to the brain is among the most common known causes. This can result from a premature separation of the placenta, an awkward birth position, a complicated labor, or interference with the umbilical cord.

However, there are a variety of other factors that can cause injury to a developing brain leading to CP. These causes include an illness during pregnancy, a premature delivery, incompatible Rh or blood types, or a fetal infection that attacks the newborns' central nervous system.

Acquired cerebral palsy can be due to a head injury caused by vehicle accidents, falls, child abuse or lack of oxygen to the brain from drowning or choking incidents. There is no known mode of inheritance.

What Are The Symptoms Of Cerebral Palsy?

The effects of CP vary with every case depending on the location and severity of brain damage. Some of the following conditions may occur:

- abnormal sensation or perception
- involuntary movements
- mental retardation
- mobility difficulties
- problems with vision, hearing or speech
- seizures or spasms

Types of Cerebral Palsy

**Ataxic CP** - is marked by a poor sense of balance and depth perception  
**Athetoid CP** - is characterized by constant uncontrollable movements

**Spastic CP** - the most common type, individuals experience stiff and difficult movement which involves tense, contracted muscles CP can also be present in any combination of the above.

Can Cerebral Palsy be prevented?

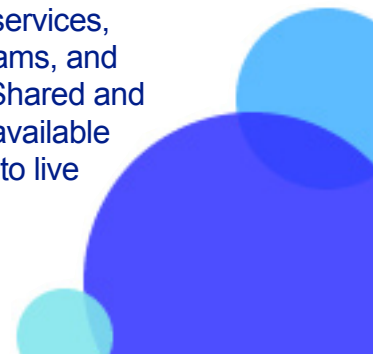
There is no easy answer to this question, but preventive measures are more possible today than ever before. Pregnant women are now routinely tested for Rh factor and are immunized after birth to prevent further incompatible pregnancies. Other preventive programs aim to reduce harmful exposures and prematurity. The most important way to prevent acquired CP is protecting the infant from injury or accidents.

Helping a child with Cerebral Palsy

**Treatment vs. Management:** CP is not "curable," but with help people with cerebral palsy can lead productive lives. Proper management will help the child reach their full potential in growth and development. Early identification of CP will lessen any developmental problems.

**Medical Team:** There are many professionals to assess and help your child develop their movement, learning, speech, hearing, social, and emotional abilities. Physicians, special educators, social workers, speech pathologists, psychologists and a variety of therapists can collaborate to develop an appropriate treatment program.

**Services:** A number of services are provided today for children with CP. Older children may need attendant care, counseling, educational and vocational training, independent living services, transportation, leisure programs, and employment opportunities. Shared and supervised apartments are available to enable the disabled adult to live independently.



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**Education:** An educational assessment of your child's learning ability can be arranged through your school system or a licensed psychologist. Since Public Law 504 and 94-142 provides for equal educational opportunities, many school systems have developed excellent programs for children with learning disabilities. Parents and teachers can also promote growth by encouraging a child with CP to take risks within the limits of health and safety. Today, many young adults with CP are enrolled in colleges and universities.

**Future:** People with CP can lead full and active lives. They can go to school; get a job; get married; raise a family and live on their own. All of the services offered enable physically handicapped individuals to have a more fulfilled and normal life, living and working within the community. New research is being done on how to prevent CP and how to improve the quality of life for people with CP so the future holds even more promise.

Fact Sheet by:

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