What is Cerebral Palsy?

Cerebral palsy is a physical disability that affects movement and posture. It is the most common physical disability in childhood.

**Motor Types**

**Spastic:** 80-90%
- Most common form
- Muscles appear stiff and tight
- Arises from Motor Cortex damage

**Ataxic:** 5%
- Characterised by shaky movements
- Affects balance and sense of positioning in space
- Arises from Cerebellum damage

**Dyskinetic:** 6%
- Characterised by involuntary movements such as dystonia, athetosis and/or chorea
- Arises from damage to the Basal Ganglia

**Mixed Types:**
- A number of children with CP will have two motor types present e.g. spasticity and dystonia

**Parts of the Body**

Cerebral palsy can affect different parts of the body e.g.

- **Spastic Quadriplegia/Bilateral**
  - One in 4 limbs affected
  - The muscles of the trunk, face and mouth are often also affected

- **Spastic Diplegia/Bilateral**
  - Both legs are affected
  - The arms may be affected to a lesser extent

- **Spastic Hemiplegia/Unilateral**
  - One side of the body (one arm and one leg) is affected

**Gross Motor Skills**

The gross motor skills (e.g. sitting and walking) of children and young people with cerebral palsy can be categorised into 5 different levels using a tool called the Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS) developed by CanChild in Canada.

**Manual Ability**

At least two thirds of children with cerebral palsy will have movement difficulties affecting one or both arms. Almost every daily activity can be impacted.

**Associated Impairments**

Children with cerebral palsy may also have a range of physical and cognitive impairments.

- 1 in 3 is unable to walk
- 1 in 4 is unable to talk
- 3 in 4 experience pain
- 1 in 4 has epilepsy
- 1 in 4 has a behaviour disorder
- 1 in 2 has an intellectual impairment
- 1 in 10 has a severe vision impairment
- 1 in 4 has bladder control problems
- 1 in 5 has sleep disorder
- 1 in 5 has saliva control problems

World Cerebral Palsy Day worldcpday.org

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**References:**


Australian Cerebral Palsy Register, Birth Years 1993-2009, September 2016.

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