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.
- **Dyskinetic:** 6%. Characterised by involuntary movements such as dystonia, athetosis and/or chorea. Arises from damage to the Basal Ganglia.
- **Ataxic:** 5%. Characterised by shaky movements. Affects balance and sense of positioning in space. Arises from Cerebellum damage.

**Associated 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

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**Parts of the Body**

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

- Spastic Quadriplegia/Bilateral: Both arms and legs are 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

**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.

- Eating
- Dressing
- Writing
- Catching a ball

**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.

GMFCS Level I

GMFCS Level II

GMFCS Level III

GMFCS Level IV

GMFCS Level V

**References:**