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:** 70-80%. Most common form. Muscles appear stiff and tight. Arises from Motor Cortex damage.

**DYSKINETIC:** 6%. Characterised by involuntary movements. Arises from Basal Ganglia damage.

**ATAXIC:** 6% Characterised by shaky movements. Affects balance and sense of positioning in space. Arises from Cerebellum damage.

**MIXED TYPES:** Combination damage.

**PARTS OF THE BODY**

Cerebral palsy can affect different parts of the body.

**QUADRIPLEGIA/BILATERAL:**
- Both arms and legs are affected. The muscles of the trunk, face and mouth are often also affected.

**DIPLEGIA/BILATERAL:**
- Both legs are affected. The arms may be affected to a lesser extent.

**HEMIPLEGIA/UNILATERAL:**
- One side of the body (one arm and one leg) is affected.

**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

**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.

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**World Cerebral Palsy Day worldcpday.org**

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