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:** 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.

**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:** Can sit and stand with support.
- **GMFCS Level II:** Can sit, stand and walk with support.
- **GMFCS Level III:** Can walk with support or舀 with assistance.
- **GMFCS Level IV:** Can walk with assistance or舀 alone.
- **GMFCS Level V:** Can舀 independently.

**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**

**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**

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