

Cerebral Palsy is:

- A number of disorders of the developing brain affecting body movement, posture and muscle coordination.
- Caused by damage to one or more specific areas of the brain, usually occurring during fetal development; before, during or shortly after birth; during infancy; or during early childhood.
- Not a disease, not progressive, nor communicable.

U.S. Statistics:

- It is estimated that 764,000 children and adults in the U.S. manifest one or more of the symptoms of cerebral palsy.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year about 10,000 babies born in the United States will develop cerebral palsy¹.
- 1,200 - 1,500 preschool age children are also recognized to have cerebral palsy each year.
- A 2009 CDC study found that the average prevalence of CP in 2004 was 3.3 per 1,000. The prevalence was significantly higher in boys than in girls overall (male/female ratio, 1.4:1)².

Types of Cerebral Palsy:

- **Spastic Cerebral Palsy:** characterized by muscle stiffness and permanent contractions
- **Athetoid or Dyskinetic Cerebral Palsy:** characterized by uncontrolled, slow, writhing movements
- **Ataxic Cerebral Palsy:** characterized by poor coordination and balance

Is Cerebral Palsy Curable?

At this time, there is no cure for the developmental brain damage that causes cerebral palsy. Training and therapy, however, can help improve muscle function and coordination. Studies have found that children who receive early intervention services such as physical and occupational therapy and other support services are more likely to lead a more typical and improved quality of life. Parents, families, professionals and caregivers of children ages zero to five, newly diagnosed with a disability or developmental delay, can visit *My Child Without Limits* (www.MyChildWithoutLimits.org) for an online resource and community.

¹Centers For Disease Control and Prevention: Cerebral Palsy. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dd/ddcp.htm> (May 2010).

²Arneson C, Durkin M, Benedict RE, Kirby RS, Yeargin-Allsopp M, Van Naarden Braun K, Doernberg N. Brief Report: Prevalence of Cerebral Palsy: Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, Three Sites, United States, 2004. *Disability and Health* 2008;2:45-48.

Although there is no cure, recent advancements in neurological studies have vastly expanded knowledge of brain development and allow researchers to explore new treatments focused on the protection and care of children with cerebral palsy and other developmental brain disorders that occur early in life.

Life Expectancy:

Past medical studies on cerebral palsy do not indicate any life expectancy trends, but research strongly suggests that life expectancy is correlated to severity of disabilities. Patients who have severe forms of cerebral palsy – particularly lack of mobility, lack of availability to feed oneself, or severe respiratory impairment – are expected to have a shortened lifespan, while those who are fully ambulatory and capable of self-feeding have normal life expectancies.

Risk Factors:

- premature birth
- low birth weight
- inability of the placenta to provide the developing fetus with oxygen and nutrients
- bacterial infection of the mother, fetus or infant that directly or indirectly attack the infant’s central nervous system
- lack of growth factors during intra-uterine life
- prolonged loss of oxygen during the birthing process
- RH blood type incompatibility between mother and infant
- severe jaundice shortly after birth
- infection of the mother with German measles or other viral diseases in early pregnancy

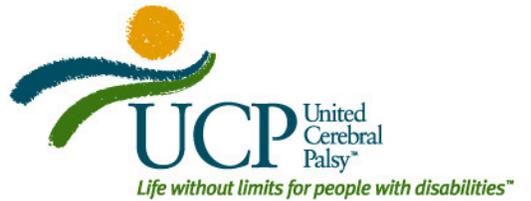
Effects:

A person with cerebral palsy may exhibit one or more of the following effects:

- muscle tightness or spasticity
- disturbance in gait or mobility
- involuntary movement
- difficulty in swallowing and problems with speech

A person with cerebral palsy may also exhibit:

- difficulty in feeding
- impairment of sight, hearing or speech
- abnormal sensation and perception
- seizures
- difficulty with bladder and bowel control
- intellectual disability
- learning disabilities
- problems with breathing due to postural difficulties
- skin disorders due to pressure sores



Online Informational Resources:

- American Association for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine (AACPDMD)
www.aacpdm.org
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
www.cdc.gov
- Cerebral Palsy International Research Foundation
www.cpirf.org
- Life Expectancy
<http://www.lifeexpectancy.com/cp.shtml>
- *My Child Without Limits:*
www.mychildwithoutlimits.org
- National Center for Health Statistics
www.cdc.gov/nchs
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (National Institutes of Health)
www.ninds.nih.gov
- United Cerebral Palsy (UCP)
www.ucp.org