

Cerebral Palsy (CP)

What is Cerebral Palsy?

- Most common motor disorder in children
- Developmental disorder that involves the brain
- Affects movement, muscle tone, and coordination
- Occurs early in life

Signs & Symptoms

- Atypical muscle tone
- Abnormal posture and reflexes
- Delayed motor development
- Difficulties with coordination and control

Causes & Risk Factors

Causes

- Injury or lesion to the brain before, during, or after birth
- Lack of oxygen during birth

Risk Factors

- Prematurity/low birth weight
- Exposure to toxins before birth

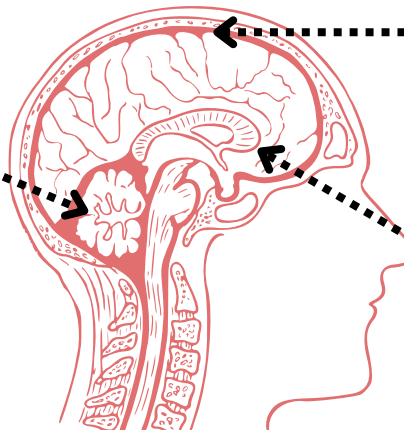
Important: ✨

There are different types and presentations of CP depending on what area of the brain is affected and the severity of the situation. Often times, the case and risk factors are so complex that it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause. Each child with cerebral palsy presents differently with their own strengths and challenges!

Types:

Ataxia

- Unsteadiness
- Difficulty with balance



Spasticity

- Increased muscle tone
- Slow, restrictive movements

Athetosis

- Involuntary and uncontrolled movements

What part of the body is affected?

Hemiplegia

- One side of the body is affected (arm and leg on same side of the body)

Diplegia

- Both lower extremities are affected

Quadriplegia

- Entire body is involved

CP in Everyday Life

Children with CP will display challenges within their school, home, and social environment.

Amongst many things, children with CP may have a difficult time moving around and exploring their environment due to abnormal changes in muscle tone, completing dressing or feeding tasks due to decreased joint mobility, or communicating their needs effectively.

What Can Occupational Therapists Do?

OTs can equip children with CP and their families with the tools needed to conquer their daily challenges so they can participate in the occupations that bring them meaning and joy!

Examples of how OT can help:

- Screen and assess for areas of potential self care, sensory, development, and motor difficulties
- Provide environmental supports to increase independence
- Provide adaptations for self care skills such as dressing and feeding
- Collaborate with families and teachers to incorporate strategies to support success in daily routines.
- Address oral motor challenges
- Massage and stretching to address muscle tone
- Facilitate child-focused and context-focused training for self care and mobility skills
- Constraint induced movement therapy for motor control
- Encourage physical activity to increase control, coordination, and endurance
- Advocate for socially inclusive environments

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