

PAIN & DISABILITYSM

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Cerebral Palsy - GENERAL

Definition:

A group of disorders characterized by loss of movement or loss of other nerve functions, caused by injuries to the brain that occur during fetal development or near the time of birth.

Cerebral palsy results from injury to the cerebrum (the largest portion of the brain, involved with higher mental faculties, sensations, and voluntary muscle activities).

Classifications of cerebral palsy include spastic, dyskinetic, ataxic, and mixed cerebral palsy.

Symptoms:

- seizures
- muscle contractions
- difficulty sucking or feeding
- irregular breathing
- delayed development of motor skills, such as reaching, sitting, rolling, crawling, walking, and so on
- motormental retardation
- mental retardation
- speech abnormalities (dysarthria)
- visual abnormalities
- hearing abnormalities
- spasticity
- progressive joint contractures
- limited range of motion
- peg teeth

Signs and tests:

Examination indicates delayed development of motor skills in many cases. Infantile reflexes (such as sucking and startle) may persist past the age where they usually disappear. Muscle tremor or spasticity may be evident, with a tendency of infants to tuck their arms in toward their sides, scissors movements of the legs, or other abnormal movements.

Diagnostic Tests:

- MRI of the head demonstrates structural or congenital abnormalities
- CT scan of the head demonstrates structural or congenital abnormalities
- hearing screen (to determine auditory status)
- visual testing (to determine visual status)
- EEG

Treatment:

- Physical medicine rehabilitation
- Medications
- To reduce spasticity, tremors and convulsions
- Surgery may be needed in some cases to release joint contractures which are a progressive problem associated with spasticity.

Cerebral palsy is a lifelong disorder. Long-term care may be required. The disorder does not affect expected length of life. The extent of disability varies.



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