

Patient and Caregiver Information about Cerebral Palsy

<http://www.neurologychannel.com/patient-information-cerebral-palsy/index.shtml>

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a neurological disorder usually associated with events that occur before or during birth. Symptoms of cerebral palsy and the severity of these symptoms vary from person to person and often change over the course of the patient's lifetime. Symptoms of spastic CP, which is the most common type of the disorder, include stiffening and contracting of the muscles that leads to weakness and/or paralysis.

CP treatment also varies. Some children with cerebral palsy require lifelong care. Others have only mild symptoms, such as difficulty with small motor tasks and uncoordinated movements, and do not require special assistance. Complications of CP include failure to thrive, learning disabilities, seizures, and vision and hearing problems.

Here are some questions to ask your child's doctor (e.g., pediatrician, neurologist) about cerebral palsy. **Print this page**, check the questions you would like answered, and bring it with you to your next doctor appointment. Learning more about cerebral palsy treatment can help parents and caregivers work with their child's medical team to help prevent complications of CP.

Questions to Ask Your Child's Doctor about Cerebral Palsy

- What causes cerebral palsy?
- What are common cerebral palsy risk factors?
- How can I help reduce the risk that my child will develop cerebral palsy before, during, and after birth?
- Is my child at increased risk for CP? Why or why not?
- What leads you to suspect that my child has cerebral palsy?
- What are the early symptoms of CP?
- What other conditions might be causing his or her symptoms?
- What does cerebral palsy diagnosis involve?
- What do diagnostic tests, such as electroencephalogram (EEG), EMG/NCV studies, laboratory tests, and imaging tests, involve?
- How should I prepare my child for these tests?

- When do you expect to have the diagnostic test results? **Date:**
- What type of cerebral palsy does my child have?
- What is the severity of my child's condition?
- What is my child's prognosis?
- How do you expect my child's condition to progress?
- Do you expect my child to require lifelong medical care?
- What do you expect his or her daily life to be like?
- What are some of the common complications associated with cerebral palsy?
- How can I help reduce the risk for these CP complications?
- Who will be the members of my child's medical team?
- How do I contact my child's health care providers? **Specialist(s):**
Telephone number(s) to call:
- What does cerebral palsy treatment involve?
- What might my child's specific treatment plan involve, now and in the future?
- What are the benefits, disadvantages, and risks of these CP treatments?
- Might my child benefit from physical therapy, speech therapy, and or behavioral therapy?
- If so, what do these treatments involve?
- Might he or she benefit from mechanical aids and devices, such as a motorized wheelchair or computerized communication device?
- If so, how do we obtain these devices? Who will teach us how to use them?
- Might casting and/or splinting be helpful? Why or why not?

- If so, what does this treatment involve?
- Will medications be used to treat my child's cerebral palsy or reduce the severity of CP complications? If so, which medications might be prescribed?
- How will these medications be administered?
- What are the most common side effects associated with these drugs?
- What should I do if my child experiences severe side effects? **Telephone number to call:**
- Might my child benefit from orthopedic surgery or neurosurgery? Why or why not?
- If so, what do these surgical procedures involve?
- Might you recommend an experimental treatment for my child?
- If so, what might this treatment involve?
- Can cerebral palsy be prevented?
- Can you recommend a source for additional information about cerebral palsy?
- Can you recommend a local support group for families of children with CP?
- Next appointment:** Date: Time:

Notes/Additional Information