

HEALTH MANAGEMENT FACT SHEET

Cerebral palsy

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a group of disorders which affect movement and muscle tone or posture. They are caused by damage which occurs to the immature, developing brain, most often before birth.

People living with CP can have healthy, active lives. Many have a life expectancy equal to that of a person without the condition.

However, it can present challenging circumstances, which require accommodations and management.

The exact cause of CP is not clear in all cases, however known causes include:

- > Bleeding in the baby's brain, or reduced blood and oxygen supply to their brain
- > An infection caught by the mother during pregnancy
- > Meningitis
- > The brain temporarily not getting enough oxygen (asphyxiation) during a difficult birth
- > Serious head injury

Key takeaways

- > Cerebral palsy is a condition which affects muscle control and movement
- > It affects around 1-in-400 children in the UK
- > CP is the most-common motor disability in childhood
- > No matter the cause, symptoms show up in the first years of a child's life
- > CP is a non-progressive disorder, meaning it will not get worse as time goes on, but it can cause new challenges and issues as a person ages
- > You cannot develop the condition as an adult
- > The life expectancy of an individual with CP is comparable to that of the general population
- > Meaningful employment is possible for many people with CP
- > Some people with severe symptoms are unable to live independently, while others with milder symptoms can find and maintain employment
- > Symptoms of CP may present some extra obstacles along with life's normal hurdles — but these can be supported and managed through therapy, surgery, medications and other measures

Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of cerebral palsy can vary greatly from person to person. It can affect the whole body, or might be limited primarily to one or two limbs, or to one side of the body.

Generally, people with CP might experience problems with movement and coordination, speech, eating and development, among other issues.

Symptoms can include:

- > Muscle spasms
- > Muscle weakness
- > Stiff muscles
- > Weak arms or legs
- > Scissor-like movements with legs when walking
- > Paralysis
- > Involuntary movements of limbs and hands
- > Twitching of the face and tongue
- > Difficulty swallowing
- > Loss of muscle tone
- > Shaking hands (tremors)
- > Poor balance

Treatment and recovery

There is currently no cure for cerebral palsy, however treatments are available to help people with the condition be as active and independent as possible throughout their lives.

This will usually involve support from a team of health care professionals, to agree a care plan, along with:

- > Physiotherapy to encourage movement, increase strength and stop muscles becoming weak
- > Occupational therapy to advise adults with CP on independent living - including on housing, getting a job, benefits and technology to assist with everyday tasks
- > Measures to help to manage symptoms, for example, medication to help with muscle spasms
- > Surgery to help with movement difficulties or other problems

Contact us to find out more



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Useful resources

[NHS: Cerebral palsy](#)

[Scope: Cerebral palsy](#)

[Business Disability Forum: Cerebral palsy](#)