

# CEREBRAL PALSY

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.



## What is cerebral palsy?

Cerebral palsy is a general term used to describe a group of conditions affecting a person's movement, posture and co-ordination. It is caused by damage to the brain, mostly before, during or shortly after birth. Around 1 in 400 children in the UK have cerebral palsy.

## Characteristics of cerebral palsy

Cerebral palsy can affect people in a wide range of ways. Some people have very mild forms, whereas others have more severe forms of the condition. No two people are affected in exactly the same way. Cerebral palsy can cause problems with sitting, standing and walking, with controlling or relaxing muscles, and with fine motor skills.

Some people who have cerebral palsy may have other conditions such as epilepsy, scoliosis (curvature of the spine), hearing or visual impairments or learning difficulties. Cerebral palsy is not a progressive condition, which means it does not get worse as your child gets older. But over the time the physical challenges of the condition can cause wear and tear on the body.

## Types of cerebral palsy

- **Spastic cerebral palsy** – the most common form. This is characterised by stiff muscles, which might be affected in different parts of the body. Hemiplegia affects one side; diplegia mainly affects the legs and quadriplegia affects the upper and lower body.
- **Athetoid or Dyskinetic cerebral palsy** – a less common form of the condition characterised by random and uncontrolled body movements or sudden involuntary spasms.
- **Ataxic cerebral palsy** – another rare form of the condition characterised by problems with balance, depth perception and fine motor skills
- **Mixed cerebral palsy** – type of the condition characterised by a mixture of the above types, most commonly stiff muscles and involuntary movements.

## Types of treatment

There is no 'cure' for cerebral palsy but there are a number of therapies available that can improve movement, co-ordination and independence, including:

- **Bobath therapy** – intense form of physiotherapy which seeks to maximise a child's ability to move, sit and function as normally as possible
- **Conductive education** – a method of teaching children with motor difficulties like cerebral palsy how to maximise mobility and independence.
- **Medication** – a number of medicines can help children who are in pain or discomfort.
- **Occupational Therapy (OT)** – can help your child gain independence and master everyday tasks such as eating and going to the toilet.
- **Orthopaedic surgery** – sometimes used to correct bones and joints. May involve lengthening muscles that are too short.





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- **Physiotherapy** – a vital component of any therapy for cerebral palsy, it prevents muscles from contracting or weakening and promotes independence.
- **Selective Dorsal Rhizotomy (SDR)** – specialist surgery not suitable in all cases. Some nerve endings in the lower spinal column are cut to reduce muscle stiffness and aid mobility.
- **Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)** – can be useful in helping children speak or develop alternative means of communicating (for example, sign language).

### Ask about

- **Information, Advice and Support (IAS)** – Amaze supports families of children and young people with SEN and disabilities in Brighton and Hove. We have a helpline, publications and a website. We also run workshops and courses and can offer one-to-one support with EHC planning and making DLA and PIP claims. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289** or visit: **www.amazebrighton.org.uk**.
- **Chailey Heritage Clinical Services** – a range of services and therapies available to children with complex physical or neurological physical disabilities. Call: **01825 722112**.
- **Compass Card** – a free leisure discount card administered by Amaze for 0 to 25 year olds registered on The Compass who live or go to school in Brighton and Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289**:
- **Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity** – regional centre of excellence in the delivery of conductive education to parents and children with cerebral palsy. Call: **01403 782294** or email: **info@dvfcc.org.uk**.
- **Independent Support** – Amaze's Independent Supporters provide extra advice and support to young people and parent carers who are going through the process of getting an EHC Plan in Brighton and Hove and Sussex. For Brighton and Hove Independent Support, call: **01273 772289**. For Sussex Independent Support, call: **0300 123 7782**.
- **Integrated Child Development and Disability Centre (Seaside View)** – where many children are diagnosed and where health, education and social care professionals can work together to support and treat your child. Referrals are usually via a health or education professional but you can contact Seaside View direct on **01273 265780**.
- **Kaleidoscope** – a group for parents and carers of children with physical disabilities. Little Wheels is for parents of children aged 0 to 8 and provides early support and info, regular swimming sessions and meet-ups. Wheels is for parents of 8 to 16 year olds and they organise regular leisure activities. Contact Gillian on: **07788 924940** (Little Wheels) or Sandra on: **07946 344220** (Wheels).
- **Making a claim for DLA** – if your child's care or mobility needs are significantly greater than the needs of their peers you may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance for them. Find out more at: **www.gov.uk**. Amaze can give you advice and practical support with making a claim. Call the helpline on: **01273 772289** or email: **helpline@amazebrighton.org.uk**.
- **Whoopsadaisy** – Brighton-based charity offering conductive education for children with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities. Runs family groups for parent carers and under 5s and Saturday and holiday clubs for 5 to 12 year olds. Call: **01273 554178**, email: **info@whoopsadaisy.org** or visit: **www.whoopsadaisy.org**.

### Further reading and useful links

- **Cerebral Palsy information website** – go to: **www.cerebralpalsy.org.uk**.
- **Scope** – **www.scope.org.uk** or call the helpline: **0808 800 3333**.

