

What is cerebral palsy?

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a physical disability that affects movement and posture. CP is a permanent and lifelong disability caused by damage to the developing brain either during pregnancy or shortly after birth. CP is the most common physical disability in childhood. According to the Cerebral Palsy Alliance, 1 in 500 Australian babies is diagnosed with cerebral palsy.

Children with CP may be affected in different ways and to differing degrees. CP can affect body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, posture and balance. Some children may also have epilepsy, visual, learning, hearing, speech, and intellectual impairments

There are 3 main types of cerebral palsy:

- ❖ Spastic cerebral palsy: spasticity refers to the stiffness or tightness of muscles that occurs because the message to the muscles is sent incorrectly through the damaged part of the brain. Spastic hemiplegia affects one half of the body and is the most common type of CP.
- ❖ Athetoid cerebral palsy: athetosis refers to involuntary and unpredictable movements. Children with athetoid CP often have very weak muscles or may feel floppy when carried.
- ❖ Ataxic cerebral palsy: ataxia refers to lack of muscle coordination. Children with ataxic CP may have unsteady, shaky movements or tremors that affect their balance. Ataxic CP is the least common type of CP.

(Cerebral Palsy Alliance)



Many children have a mixture of several of these movement patterns, and may be affected to varying degrees.

The most important influence on a child's early development is daily interaction and activities within the family environment. Individualised early intervention programs can also support children and families to access opportunities and to achieve their potential.

For further information:

<http://www.directory.byronearlyintervention.org.au/>

<http://www.cerebralpalsy.org.au/>

http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/special_needs/special_needs.html



Shaping Outcomes

early childhood intervention service

> because we can