

Cerebral Palsy

Definition:

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is a permanent non-progressive disorder, characterized by disorder of movement.

CP is caused by damage to the motor control centers of the young developing brain and can occur during pregnancy, during childbirth or after birth.

Depending on the location and extent of the damage, cerebral palsy can sometimes be associated with other problems such as mental retardation, ear and hearing problems, eye and vision problems, communication problems, behavior disorder and perception disorder.

Cerebral palsy is neither contagious nor inherited.

Causes:

Cerebral Palsy is due to a damage that occurred

- During pregnancy
 - o An infection or illness in the mother - for example, rubella, toxoplasmosis, ...
 - o Metabolic disease
 - o Rh incompatibility
 - o Anoxia (Oxygen shortage)
- During childbirth: Premature birth, bleeding, anoxia (oxygen shortage)...
- After birth: head trauma, choking, poisoning, tumor ...

Types and forms:

There are three main types of cerebral palsy:

- Spastic Cerebral Palsy: muscle tone is too high or too tight, movement is stiff, jerky, and limited.
- Athetoid Cerebral Palsy: muscle tone is mixed - sometimes too high and sometimes too low, the affected parts of the body perform involuntary, purposeless movements which interfere with other skills requiring coordinated movements.
- Ataxic Cerebral Palsy: Low muscle tone and poor coordination of movements that are unsteady and shaky.

The specific forms of cerebral palsy are determined by the extent, type, and location of a child's abnormalities:

- Monoplegia : affects only one limb
- Hemiplegia : affects limbs on one side of the body
- Diplegia : affects both arms or both legs
- Triplegia : affects three limbs

Diagnosis:

An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and blood tests are recommended to confirm or invalidate the diagnosis.

Treatment:

There is no cure for **Cerebral Palsy**, as the damage to the brain cannot be reversed. What can be done however , is that it can be managed.

The parts of the body that are not affected need to be exercised regularly to increase their function and the parts which are affected have to be exercised to optimize their functioning capacity. This can only be done through learning, exercise and training.

A **holistic** approach is necessary for the treatment of Cerebral Palsy:

- Medical care (neurology, Ophthalmology, Otorhinolaryngology, orthopedic...)

- Rehabilitation (physical therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, psychomotricity, Psychology)
- Education
- Mechanical aids and orthotic devices
- Adaptations for posture (laying, sitting or standing)
- Surgery

This approach is essential to reduce the impact of the condition, to tackle the core disabilities that affect the child's quality of life and to help the child reach his or her potential and maximize independence. The ultimate goal is to promote successful integration within the family, **society, and possible workplace.**