

CEREBRAL PALSY

Cerebral palsy is a condition that affects the body movement and muscle co ordination of the child right from the time of their birth. It is caused due to damage of one or more specific areas of the brain, occurring during foetal development.

“Cerebral” indicates to the brain and “palsy” to muscle weakness or poor control.

It is not a progressive condition by itself, but however there are chances that secondary conditions can develop which may get worse or remain the same as the child grows up. The condition is not totally curable but training and therapy can improve the functions of the child.

Types of cerebral palsy:

Spastic cerebral palsy:

Most of the children are affected by this type of CP, in which the muscles are stiffly and permanently contracted and they have poor muscle tone.

Athetoid or dyskinetic cerebral palsy:

This type of CP is characterised by slow, writhing movements in hands, feet, arms or legs and in some cases it affects the muscles of the face and tongue which leads to drooling. Most of the children with this condition have speech impairment due to lack of co ordination of muscle movements of the tongue.

Ataxic Cerebral palsy:

They have poor muscle coordination and walk unsteadily with a wide based gait, placing their feet unusually far apart; and they have problems with fine motor skills. They may also have some small tremors.

Causes:

There are a number of internal and external factors that can cause brain damage and lead to cerebral palsy. And the factors can be during pregnancy or due to complications during the labour. Any serious virus disease of the mother during pregnancy can directly attack the central nervous system.

The main cause that leads to Cerebral palsy, during labour is because of insufficient supply of oxygen to the foetus or to the new born brain.

Some of the factors during delivery that leads to this condition are:

- Awkward birth position of the baby
- Premature birth
- Umbilical chord strangled around the neck of the baby during delivery can also cause distress to the foetus.

Since most of the causes are largely connected to the foetal development and child bearing process this condition is also referred to as congenital cerebral palsy.

Major Symptoms:

Symptoms of CP vary from person to person. In many cases, a child with CP may show signs of: muscular weakness, paralysis, lack of coordination, slurred speech, involuntary convulsions, or visual impairment. Some children with CP are ambulatory, while others are wheelchair bound.

Educational approach for a child with Cerebral Palsy:

A child with CP will have inter-connected issues and challenges that has to be addressed. These children would require physical therapy to attend to the muscular needs and speech therapy and occupational therapy depending on their level of requirement. In order to help the children who have disabilities, one must understand the nature of the impairment. This understanding may be reached by observing the child during the various activities and in situations which are appropriate to them. Careful observations from these sessions will help the instructor to list out the various activities to increase his abilities and to overcome his challenges for performing that task. The task is not to list out the actions that he cannot perform because of his disability, the task is to ascertain some activities that would facilitate him to improve his performance.

