

# WHAT IS CEREBRAL PALSY?

**Cerebral palsy is a physical disability that affects movement and posture.**

It is the most common physical disability in childhood.

**17 million people**  
with cerebral palsy worldwide

You can help advance our knowledge and research into cerebral palsy by joining a Cerebral Palsy Register. Find out more at [worldcpday.org/cpreisters](http://worldcpday.org/cpreisters)

## MOTOR TYPES

**SPASTIC: 80-90%**

Most common form. Muscles appear stiff and tight. Arises from Motor Cortex damage.

**DYSKINETIC: 6%**

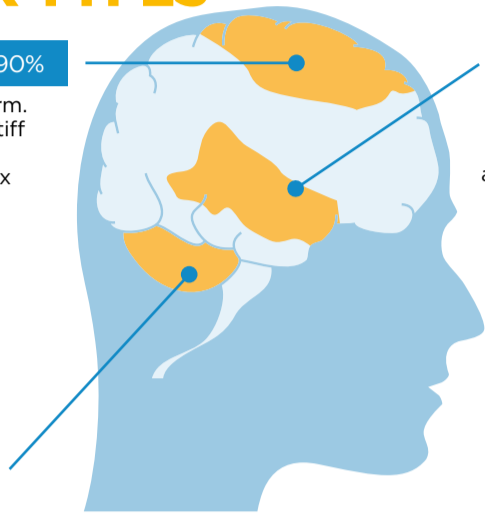
Characterised by involuntary movements such as dystonia, athetosis and/or chorea. Arises from damage to the Basal Ganglia.

**ATAXIC: 5%**

Characterised by shaky movements. Affects balance and sense of positioning in space. Arises from Cerebellum damage.

**MIXED TYPES:**

A number of children with CP will have two motor types present e.g. spasticity and dystonia.

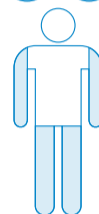


## PARTS OF THE BODY

Cerebral palsy can affect different parts of the body e.g.

**SPASTIC QUADRIPLÉGIA/ BILATERAL**

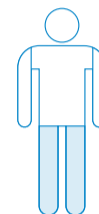
LIMBS AFFECTED  
1 2 3 4



Both arms and legs are affected. The muscles of the trunk, face and mouth are often also affected.

**SPASTIC DIPLEGIA/ BILATERAL**

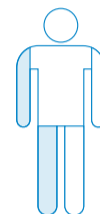
LIMBS AFFECTED  
1 2 3 4



Both legs are affected. The arms may be affected to a lesser extent.

**SPASTIC HEMIPLEGIA/ UNILATERAL**

LIMBS AFFECTED  
1 2 3 4



One side of the body (one arm and one leg) is affected.

## GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

The gross motor skills (e.g. sitting and walking) of children and young people with cerebral palsy can be categorised into 5 different levels using a tool called the Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS) developed by CanChild in Canada.



GMFCS Level I



GMFCS Level II



GMFCS Level III



GMFCS Level IV



GMFCS Level V

## MANUAL ABILITY

At least two thirds of children with cerebral palsy will have movement difficulties affecting one or both arms. Almost every daily activity can be impacted.



Eating



Dressing



Writing



Catching a ball

## ASSOCIATED IMPAIRMENTS

Children with cerebral palsy may also have a range of physical and cognitive impairments.

**1 in 3**

is unable to walk



**1 in 4**

is unable to talk



**3 in 4**

experience pain



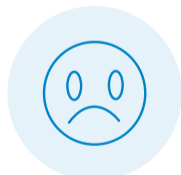
**1 in 4**

has epilepsy



**1 in 4**

has a behaviour disorder



**1 in 2**

has an intellectual impairment



**1 in 10**

has a severe vision impairment



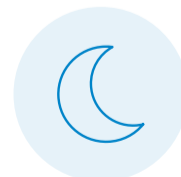
**1 in 4**

has bladder control problems



**1 in 5**

has a sleep disorder



**1 in 5**

has saliva control problems



References: Novak I, Hines M, Goldsmith S, Barclay R (2012). Clinical prognostic messages from a systematic review on cerebral palsy. *Pediatrics*, Nov 2012;130 (5). Palisano R, Rosenbaum P, Walter S, Russell D, Wood E & Galuppi B (1997). Development and validation of a Gross Motor Function Classification System for children with Cerebral Palsy. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 39, 214-223. CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research [www.canchild.ca](http://www.canchild.ca). Australian Cerebral Palsy Register, Birth Years 1993-2009, September 2016.