



Infants at Risk for Cerebral Palsy

You are receiving this handout because your child has a chance of having a condition called cerebral palsy (CP). CP means difficulty with movement due to a brain abnormality that occurred before, during, or soon after birth.



Your child has a higher chance of having CP because:
(healthcare provider check all that apply before providing to family)

- They were born many weeks before their due date (very preterm): _____ weeks gestation
- They were born small or did not grow as much as expected (small for gestational age, intrauterine growth restriction)
- Images of their brain showed areas that were abnormal
 - Intraventricular hemorrhage (IVH) grade I/II
 - Intraventricular hemorrhage grade (IVH) III/IV
 - Periventricular leukomalacia (PVL)
 - Other: _____
- Their brain did not receive enough oxygen when they were born (hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy; HIE)
- They received a low score on a neurological exam
 - Hammersmith Neonatal Neurological Examination
 - Hammersmith Infant Neurological Examination
 - Other: _____
- They received a low score on an assessment of their motor skills
 - Test of Infant Motor Performance
 - Other: _____
- They had abnormal movements on the General Movements Assessment
 - cramped synchronized at under 6 weeks (adjusted)
 - absent fidgety at 10-14 weeks (adjusted)



It is too early to tell if your child will have CP or not. However, it is important to watch your child as they grow. There are many interventions and supports for children with CP. The sooner we can identify children with CP, the sooner families can get help.



Early Signs of Cerebral Palsy

Think of these signs like clues: Finding one or more of these clues does not mean your child definitely has cerebral palsy (CP). On the other hand, your child does not need to have all of the clues to be diagnosed with CP. Only a doctor can diagnose your child with CP. If you notice any of the early signs listed below, talk to your child's doctor.

If your child was born more than 3 weeks early, you will need to "adjust" their age to determine which milestones to look for.

A. Your baby is _____ months old

B. Your baby was born _____ months early

C. Your baby's adjusted age is _____ months (A - B)

Clue #1: Your child does not achieve motor milestones at the expected ages.

At 2 months, child does not:



- hold their head up when on their tummy
- move both arms and both legs
- open their hands

At 4 months, child does not:



- hold their head steady without support when held
- hold a toy when you put it in their hand
- use their arms to swat or bat at toys
- bring their hands to their mouth
- push up onto their elbows when on their tummy
- hold their hands open

At 6 months, child does not:



- roll from tummy to back
- push up with straight arms when on their tummy
- lean on their hands for support when sitting
- pick up small objects by raking with their fingers
- pick up small objects with either hand

Clue #2: Your child's muscles feel unusual.

Your child's body may feel stiff, with muscles that are tight or tense. Or, your child's body may feel floppy, with muscles that are loose or soft.

Clue #3: Your child does not use the two sides of their body in the same way.

Your child may prefer to use one side of their body more than the other. For example, they may always reach with their right hand. You may notice that one hand or foot is clenched while the other is relaxed.

Clue #4: Your child shows the following unusual movement patterns.

- Your child may arch their back and neck when held, pushing away from you.
- Your child's legs may get stiff and cross when they are picked up.

Clue #5: Your child has significant difficulties with feeding.

Your child may not be able to suck well on a nipple, or may gag, choke, or cough often.