



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.