

DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Cerebral Palsy

If your child has cerebral palsy (CP), you will need to help them optimize his or her physical capabilities and learning abilities. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate the condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Stiffness in the arms or legs that children and adults with CP often have. This can interfere with muscle control and it can be painful. Medication, physical therapy, or injections may reduce the spasticity.
Motor weakness in one part of the body, while paralysis is complete loss of motor function in a part of the body. Most people who have CP have paresis rather than paralysis, and can move the body, but with limited control.
The ability to think, learn, and problem solve. There is a variable range of cognitive ability with CP, as some people with CP have normal or above average learning ability, while others have substantial learning impairments.
A condition that is present from birth is considered congenital. Congenital conditions can be caused by genetic changes, hereditary factors, or gestational (pregnancy) difficulties, but most of the time they are unexplained.
Genetic testing can identify changes in the genes that could be responsible for symptoms. Some medical conditions that cause neurological problems are caused by genetic changes. When a child has a group of symptoms that could be a genetic syndrome, or when there are several family members who have similar symptoms, genetic testing can identify genes that could be responsible. This can help with understanding risk and with family planning.
Cerebral dysplasia is when some regions in the brain are not normally developed. These patterns can be identified in a brain imaging study, such as a brain MRI, and are sometimes associated with CP.
Excessive fluid in and around the brain, usually resulting from brain malformations such as cerebral dysplasia. Hydrocephalus can cause problems such as an enlarged head, excessive drowsiness, or even loss of consciousness. There are treatments for hydrocephalus, including removal of the fluid, shunt placement, and surgery.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your child's cerebral palsy.

About Symptoms		
	Should I expect my child to have seizures?	
	Can my child's symptoms worsen as he or she gets older?	
About Causes & Risk Factors		
	Should I or other members of my family be concerned about having another child with CP?	
About Diagnosis		
	Does my child need genetic testing?	
Ab	About Treatment	
	What types of physical therapy can improve my child's muscle control?	
	muscle control!	
	Are there any treatments that can improve my child's condition?	
	Are there any treatments that can control spasticity?	
	Do any alternative therapies help in CP?	
About Coping		
	How can I know what my child's potential is for	
	learning and physical mobility?	
	Is there anything I can do if my child becomes	
	agitated?	
Αb	out Living With CP	
	How can I prevent my child from choking on food?	
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	What should we do about incontinence?	
	Is there a good approach for preventing bedsores or	
	pressure sores?	