



# OAASIS INFORMATION SHEET

## Cerebral Palsy

Office for  
Advice  
Assistance  
Support  
and  
Information  
on  
Special needs

**Helpline:**  
01590 622880  
**Fax:**  
01590 622687

[www.oaasis.co.uk](http://www.oaasis.co.uk)

**FREEPOST  
RLYY-TAUC-YRYS  
Brock House  
Grigg Lane  
Brockenhurst  
Hampshire  
SO42 7RE**

**OAASIS  
A part of  
Cambian Education  
Services**



Initially called Little's Disease, after the English surgeon William Little who first wrote about it in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, **Cerebral Palsy (CP)** is a blanket term for a number of disorders which affect muscles and movement.

If that part of the brain which controls movement is injured or fails to develop properly, a child may be born with or develop CP. At present there appears to be no single cause for CP, but medical research indicates that damage to the developing foetus from a viral infection, certain drugs, poor nutrition or prematurity may be a strong factor, or, to a lesser degree, low birthweight, lack of oxygen or injury to the brain before, during or just after birth, or cerebral bleed, may also be attributable. Meningitis or encephalitis in early childhood can also be a cause. It is thought that CP affects 1 in every 400 children (about 1,800 babies are diagnosed with CP in Britain each year).

### Spastic CP

This is the most common form of CP. The person will have very stiff muscles and a decreased range of jerky movements making the most basic of activities extremely hard work.

If it affects just one half of the body it is described as *hemiplegic*. If both legs are affected (but not the arms) it is *diplegic*. If both legs and arms are affected, it is *quadriplegic*.

### Athetoid or Dyskinetic CP:

The person will have frequent involuntary muscle movements because their muscles rapidly change from floppy to tense in a way they can't control. They may have difficulties controlling the tongue; unintentional movements of the face, arms and upper body; diaphragm (breathing) and vocal cords and hearing problems may also be present. Because of these problems, their speech may be difficult to understand until you get to know them well. This type of CP by itself is quite rare.

### Ataxia CP:

This affects the whole body: the person will probably be unsteady when walking, their balance will be affected and they will be generally uncoordinated. They will experience extreme shakiness and have jerky hand movements and speech.

Many people with CP will have a combination of the three types. As with many neurodevelopmental disorders, CP can affect people in widely different degrees of severity. No two people will be the same but as always, try to see the person and not the condition.

### Physical and mental characteristics

A child who has CP may have or develop some - not all - of the following, to some degree:

- limited movements
- uncontrolled movements
- muscle weakness
- muscle stiffness
- muscle spasm or
- muscle floppiness
- speech problems
- hearing difficulties
- chewing / swallowing difficulties
- epilepsy
- a squint
- visual problems

### Treatment

A child born with cerebral palsy will always have cerebral palsy. It is not an illness, it is not contagious, it does not get worse, but on the other hand neither does it diminish with age. There are treatments and therapies which will help alleviate some of the symptoms of CP, and much can be done to help children become more independent. This includes your patience, understanding and willingness to look beyond the disorder - your efforts to do so will be well rewarded.

As always with a neurological disorder, a multi-disciplinary approach is advised. Children may need help from a range of professionals, including physio-, occupational and speech and language therapists, and educational psychologists. Some children will need walkers, wheelchairs or protective headwear, some will need specially adapted knives, forks, spoons and writing equipment. For those whose speech is very

difficult to understand it will be easier for them to use a communication aid, whether this is a set of simple cards with words / pictures, or a sophisticated electronic speaking device.

In addition, there are more specific medical interventions such as the use of Botox injections, and in more extreme cases, surgery, that can help achieve improvements in movement and communication.

**Teachers** should be aware that learning difficulties *may* be present, but this is not the rule: many children with CP have average intelligence and some may have above average intelligence. If there are learning difficulties present, these may range - as in any population - from mild through moderate to specific or severe. Perceptual or spatial difficulties are not uncommon, but are not always picked up.

Please contact the organisations below for their information packs for parents and teachers:

**Other Useful Contacts:**

**SCOPE**, PO Box 833, Milton Keynes, MK12 5NY **Helpline (Scope Response): 0800 800 3333**  
Website: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk) Email: [response@scope.org.uk](mailto:response@scope.org.uk) **Fax: 01908 321051**

Scope is a national disability organisation focussing on cerebral palsy whose services include creating early years, education, and independent living and employment opportunities for disabled people.

**Advance: The Institute for the Scotson Technique** **Tel: 01342 311137**  
6 Station Road, East Grinstead, W Sussex RH19 1DJ Email: [advancecentre@btconnect.com](mailto:advancecentre@btconnect.com)

Uses The Scotson Technique, restorative neurology for children and young people which restores critical respiratory and circulatory needs of the brain after brain injury. Gentle home exercises are taught to parents.

Web: [www.advancecentre.org.uk](http://www.advancecentre.org.uk)

**The Bobath Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy** **Tel: 0208 444 3355**

Bradbury House, 250 East End Road, East Finchley, London N2 8AU **Fax: 0208 444 3399**

Offers neuro-developmental treatment for children and adults with CP and acquired neurological conditions.

They also have centres in Wales and Scotland.

Website: [www.bobath.org.uk](http://www.bobath.org.uk)

**Capability Scotland**, ASCS, 11 Ellersly Road, Edinburgh EH12 6HY **Tel: 0131 313 5510**

Website: [www.capability-scotland.org.uk](http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk) **Textphone: 0131 346 2529**

Email: [ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk](mailto:ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk) **Fax: 0131 346 1681**

**Cedar Foundation**, 1 Upper Lisburn Road, Belfast BT10 0GW **Tel: 028 9062 3382**

Covering Northern Ireland, the children and young people's service offers a range of programmes providing information and support. Website: [www.cedar-foundation.org](http://www.cedar-foundation.org) Email: [cse@cedar-foundation.org](mailto:cse@cedar-foundation.org)

**The Foundation for Conductive Education** **Tel: 0121 449 1569**

Cannon Hill House, Russell Road, Moseley, Birmingham B13 8RD **Fax: 0121 449 1611**

A registered charity for children and adults with incurable movement disabilities, offers more independence and dignity by teaching them how to overcome their disability in everyday life

Website: [www.conductive-education.org.uk](http://www.conductive-education.org.uk)

**Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments** **Tel: 01236 456100**

1 Craighalbert Way, Cumbernauld, Scotland G68 0LS **Fax: 01236 736889**

A centre and school for children with CP, based on conductive education and the Scottish Curriculum

There is a medical adviser and a family support worker.

Website: [www.craighalbert.org.uk](http://www.craighalbert.org.uk)

**Internet:** as well as the above, see the following for helpful information and articles -

[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/cerebral\\_palsy/detail\\_cerebral\\_palsy.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/cerebral_palsy/detail_cerebral_palsy.htm) the USA's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

[www.specialabilities.co.uk](http://www.specialabilities.co.uk) a website set up by Gillian Archbold, a parent, and Sabrina, her daughter with CP.

They offer support, advice, information booklets and training. Has a fun section for children to access. Email:

[special@abilities.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:special@abilities.fsnet.co.uk)

**Reading: see also OAASIS information sheet 'Books – where to find them'**

Refer to the above contacts for their publication lists, and, as new books on childhood disorders and learning difficulties are coming out faster than ever before; contact -

**Routledge Education** (member of the Taylor Francis Group) Tel: 020 7017 6000 Fax: 020 7017 6699

Website: [www.routledgeeducation.com](http://www.routledgeeducation.com)

**Jessica Kingsley Publishers:** Website: [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com) Email: [post@jkp.com](mailto:post@jkp.com) Tel: 020 7833 2307

And the **internet book shop** [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk).

**Cambian Education Services** run seven residential special schools and colleges for young people with autistic spectrum disorders, Asperger Syndrome/HFA, severe learning difficulties. OAASIS can give you advice on the schools and send you their prospectuses or visit the website [www.cambianeducation.com](http://www.cambianeducation.com). OAASIS produces a wide range of **free Information Sheets**, **8 publications** entitled 'First Guide to...' and **wallet sized cards** explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OAASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at [www.oaasis.co.uk](http://www.oaasis.co.uk). All sheets are checked annually, please ensure you have the current version.