

# GMFCS – Level 1

## What Movements to Expect in Your Child with Cerebral Palsy (CP) up to Age 18

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There are 3 main ways to classify cerebral palsy (CP): by area of the body affected (topography), by atypical body movements and postures (movement disorder) and how they use their body to get around (gross motor function or functional mobility). This handout explains how CP is classified by gross motor function, which describes how people sit, stand, walk and do activities.

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### What is GMFCS?

The Gross Motor Function Classification System (GMFCS) is used to describe levels of functional mobility and gives children with CP a score or level to describe how they will get around as they grow up.

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### What do the levels mean?

The difference between levels is based on your child's movement and motor ability, the need for devices like crutches, walkers or wheelchairs, and the quality of movement. Level 1 means less help is needed and Level 5 means more help is needed. There is a range of ability within each level.

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### What does Level 1 mean?

Children walk without limitations in most settings through adulthood. They can run and jump but may have trouble with speed, balance and coordination. Your child's GMFCS level usually stays the same as they age. This tool may not be a predictor of your child's movements at all ages.

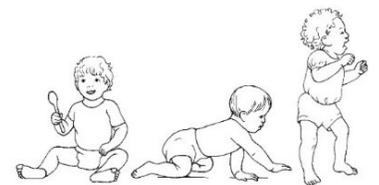
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## What can I expect at different ages for my child at Level 1?

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### Before Age 2

- Sit without help and use hands freely
- Crawl on hands and knees, pull to stand and take steps holding on to nearby objects
- Walk between 18 months and 2 years of age without help



### To Learn More

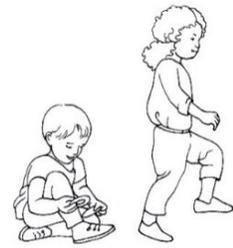
- Cerebral Palsy  
206-987-0199
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

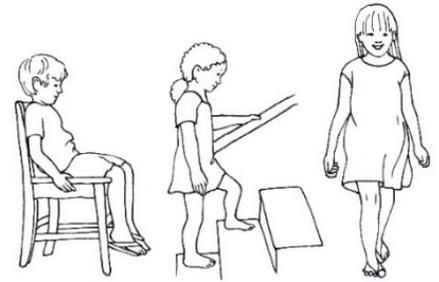
Age 2 to 4

- Floor sit with both hands free
- Sit, stand and walk without help
- Change directions while walking
- Walk backwards
- Carry objects while walking



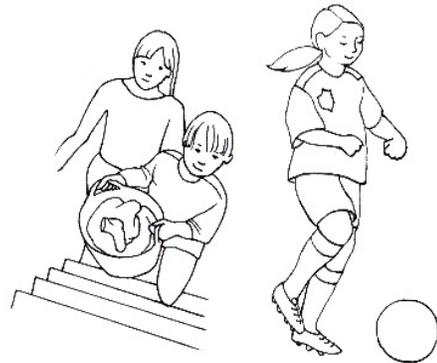
Age 4 to 6

- Sit in a chair without help
- Move from floor and from sitting to standing without help
- Walk and climb stairs
- May start to run and jump and learn to kick a ball



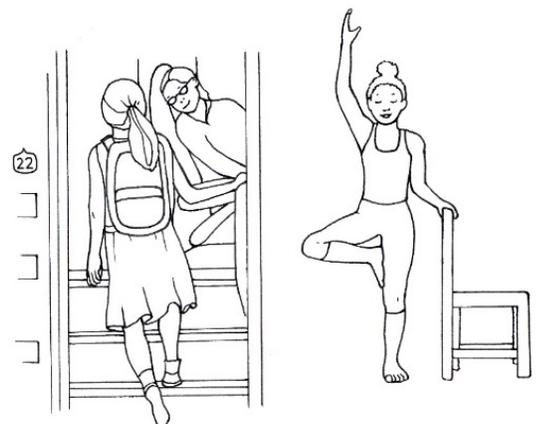
Age 6 to 12

- Walk everywhere, including up and down curbs without help
- Walk upstairs while carrying objects
- Run and jump, but may have difficulty with speed, balance, and coordination
- May play physical games and sports



Age 12 to 18

- Walk everywhere, including up and down curbs without help
- Carry objects up/downstairs independently
- Run and jump, but may have difficulty with speed, balance, and coordination
- May need help and encouragement to continue to play physical games and sports into adulthood



### What can I do to help my child?

- In the early years, help your child learn to sit, stand and walk (gross motor skills) by practicing daily.
- Build strength, balance and endurance by engaging in activities that your child enjoys.
- In later years, provide adaptations to help them participate.
- As your child gets bigger, they may avoid physical activities they used to enjoy or find them to be harder. It is normal to fall behind peers in later years, but with adaptations, they can continue to enjoy these activities.

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### Where can I learn more?

You can read more about GMFCS at CanChild:  
[canchild.ca/en/resources/42-gross-motor-function-classification-system-expanded-revised-gmfcs-e-r](https://canchild.ca/en/resources/42-gross-motor-function-classification-system-expanded-revised-gmfcs-e-r).