

GMFCS – Level 3

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

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.

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.

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.

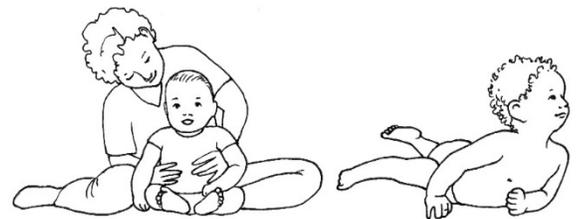
What does Level 3 mean?

Children walk with canes, crutches or walkers. Children decide how to get around based on the environment and personal preference. As children age, their motor abilities and equipment needs may also change. 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.

What can I expect at different ages for my child at Level 3?

Before age 2

- Sit up on the floor when their low back is supported
- Roll and army crawl



To Learn More

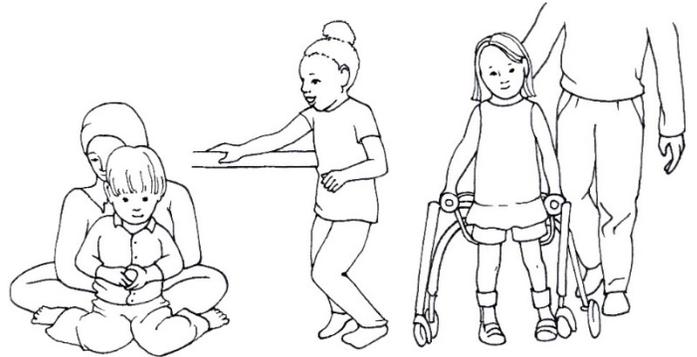
- Cerebral Palsy Program
206-987-0199
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

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.

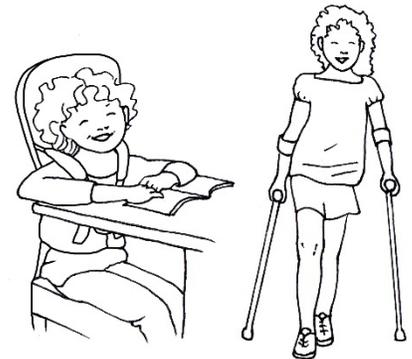
Age 2 to 4

- Need help getting into position to "W-sit" on the floor (knees forward and feet out to the sides)
- Army crawl or crawl on hands and knees (often without leg movements)
- Pull to stand on a stable surface and walk short distances
- Walk short distances indoors using a walker with help steering and turning



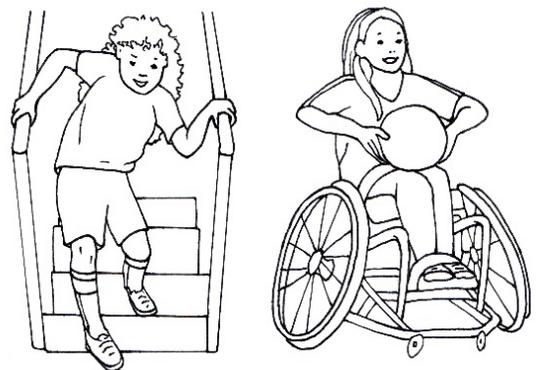
Age 4 to 6

- Sit in a chair but may need support to use hands freely
- Get into and out of chairs using a stable surface to push on or pull up with their arms
- Walk with a cane or crutches on level surfaces and climb stairs with help
- May need help moving long distances or outdoors



Age 6 to 12

- Walk using a cane or crutches in most indoor settings
- When seated, may require a seat belt for balance
- May need help for sit-to-stand and floor-to-stand
- Use a self-propel manual wheelchair for long distances
- May walk up and down stairs holding onto railings or with help
- Need a wheelchair or powered mobility for physical games and sports



Age 12 to 18

- Walk using a cane or crutches indoors
- When seated, may require a seat belt for balance
- May need help to sit-to-stand and floor-to-stand
- Use a wheelchair for long distances
- Walk up and down stairs holding onto railings or with help
- May need a wheelchair or powered mobility for physical games and sports



How can I help my child?

- In early years, support standing and/or walking to help with bone development and encourage physical activities to prevent hip problems and loss of flexibility.
- In later years, watch for complaints of tiredness and increased negative behaviors like refusal, as these may be signs of pain.
- Increased use of adaptive equipment (walker, crutches or wheelchair) may help to decrease pain and improve participation in activities.
- Watch for and reduce feelings of failure due to need for adaptations (use of walker, crutches or wheelchair). Using adaptations is common for a child at this level.

Where can I get more information?

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