

Cerebral Palsy (CP) Movement Disorders

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 the different types of movement disorders.

What does movement disorder mean?

Children with CP have an injury in their brain. Different parts of the brain control the muscles in the trunk, head, neck, arms and legs. CP can cause atypical body movements and postures in children, also known as movement disorders. Movement disorders affect a child's muscle tone, motor control, strength and function.

Where can I see examples?

See this video of children with each movement disorder (jump to 5:20-8:00) on the Cerebral Palsy Alliance website.

cerebralpalsy.org.au/our-research/about-cerebral-palsy/what-is-cerebral-palsy/

Movement Disorder Types

Ataxic (a-TAX-ick)

CP with mostly wobbly or shaky movements, resulting in a lack of balance and coordination.

Dyskinetic (dis-ki-NEH-tick)

Uncontrollable movements that can be slow and writhing or rapid and jerky. Muscle tone can change (varying from too tight to too loose) throughout the day. Dyskinetic CP can be subdivided into athetosis, chorea and dystonia or a mixture.

Athetosis

Small, twisting, snake-like movements mostly seen in the hands and feet

Chorea

Large, jerky (arrhythmic), non-repetitive dance-like movements

Choreo-athetoid

Large, arrhythmic, non-repetitive dance-like movements (chorea) and small, twisting, snake-like movements (athetosis) together

Dystonia

Rigid, stiff movements of arms, legs, trunk, face or neck that increase when excited, upset or trying to move. Can also be seen at rest

1 of 2

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.



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Dystonic (dis-TAH-nick)

CP with rigid, stiff movements of arms, legs, trunk, face or neck that increase when excited, upset or trying to move. Can also be seen at rest

Hypotonic (hi-po-TAH-nick)

CP with only low muscle tone (hypotonia)

Mixed

A combination of different types of movement disorders. This term is often used when both spasticity (tight or stiff muscles) and dystonia (rigid, stiff body movements) are present.

Spastic (SPASS-tick)

CP with a consistent, abnormal increase in muscle tone or stiffness of muscle. Spastic CP is also described as resistance to fast stretch, which makes movement difficult.

Summary

- Sometimes movement disorders change as children get older.
 - It can be hard to identify different types of movement disorders. If you are hearing different things from different providers, bring this up with your providers at Seattle Children's.
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