

Cerebral Palsy

I. What is Cerebral Palsy?

Cerebral palsy is caused by damage to the brain. Affected children usually have abnormal muscle tone as well as uncoordinated control of movements or postures.

Their behaviour varies greatly among different types or grades of cerebral palsy. For instance, some children can walk independently with minimal stiffness while some may be unable to move on their own.

II. What are the symptoms of children with Cerebral Palsy?

Delay in motor development: because of abnormal muscle tone, different parts of the body, including the head, hands and feet, become excessively rigid or floppy.

In babies:

The head:

- Cannot raise the head
- Bending backwards excessively when excited
- Difficulty in sucking and swallowing

The feet:

- “Scissored” gait or inability to kick

The hands:

- Clenched fists or not reaching for objects

In infants:

The head:

- Poor neck control
- Involuntary twitching of facial muscles may be present
- Difficulty in closing the mouth, chewing, swallowing and speaking

The feet:

- Difficulty in walking

The hands:

- Difficulty in stretching hands and grasping objects

The body:

- Unsteady sitting posture

III. What causes Cerebral Palsy?

Before Birth

- Congenital abnormalities in brain development
- Infection in the mother during pregnancy

During Birth

- Brain injury due to oxygen deficiency during difficult labour
- Brain haemorrhage in premature babies

After Birth

- Infection of the brain, such as encephalitis and meningitis
- Head trauma causing concussion or brain haemorrhage

Unknown Factors

- * Research indicates that cerebral palsy affects approximately two per 1 000 children (Source: Caring for Children with Cerebral Palsy: A Team Approach)

IV. Other possible co-existing problems

Vision

- Refractive error, such as myopia
- Strabismus
- Amblyopia

Hearing

- Hearing impairment of different grades

Language

- Difficulty in expression, comprehension and pronunciation

Senses

- Abnormal responses to sensory stimuli, e.g. fear of being touched or fear of movements

Physical Health

- Common problems such as epilepsy or difficulty in swallowing

Intelligence

- Different grades of mental retardation

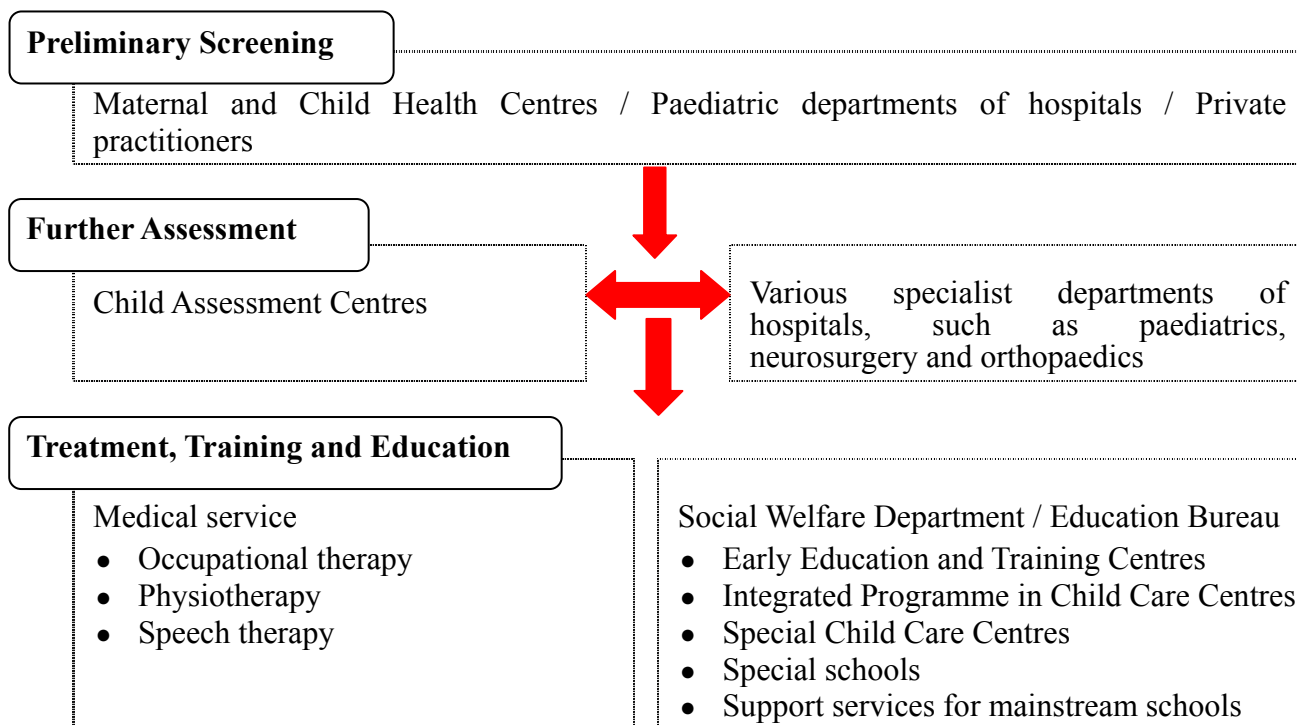
Attention

- Weaker attention

V. Why is it necessary to arrange early assessment and treatment?

- Parents can understand their child's developmental needs as early as possible and arrange appropriate care and treatment to prevent secondary problems, such as tendon contracture, joint and spinal deformity or emotional and behavioural problems
- Parents can help their child in using assistive devices to enhance the ability of independent living, self-care and communication
- The child can receive appropriate medical follow-up and rehabilitation services as early as possible, including proper arrangement for training and education, so as to maximize the child's potentials

VI. Where can parents seek help if their child is suspected to have Cerebral Palsy?



After adolescence:

Continuing Education and Training

- Vocational Training Council
- Social Welfare Department
- Tertiary institutions

Employment

- Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department
- Employment service of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service

VII. How can parents help their child with Cerebral Palsy?

- Understand and accept the child's developmental conditions
- Participate actively in the child's training
- Master the training methods
- Keep in touch with the instructors
- Join parent self-help groups
- Make good use of community resources
- Face the problem positively
- Share feelings with others to relieve negative emotion

Enquiry Numbers and Related Websites

Government Bureau / Departments

- Department of Health
 - Child Assessment Service 2246 6633
www.dhcas.gov.hk
 - Family Health Service 2961 8855
(Maternal and Child Health Centres) www.fhs.gov.hk
- Social Welfare Department 2343 2255
www.swd.gov.hk
- Education Bureau 2891 0088
(24-Hour Hotline) <http://serc.edb.gov.hk>
 - Special Education and Special Schools
 - Special Education Resource Centre
- Vocational Training Council 2836 1000
www.vtc.edu.hk

Other Organisations

- Hospital Authority 2300 6555
(General Enquiry) www.ha.org.hk
- Rehabaid Centre 2364 2345
(24 Hour Information and Education Hotline) www.rehabaid.org
- The Parents' Association of Pre-school Handicapped Children 2324 6099
<http://www.parentsasn.org.hk>

Overseas

- Canchild Centre for Childhood Disability Research www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/canchild

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