

DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Cerebral Palsy

If your child has cerebral palsy (CP), you will need to help them optimize his or her physical capabilities and learning abilities. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate the condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Spasticity	Stiffness in the arms or legs that children and adults with CP often have. This can interfere with muscle control and it can be painful. Medication, physical therapy, or injections may reduce the spasticity.
Paresis	Motor weakness in one part of the body, while paralysis is complete loss of motor function in a part of the body. Most people who have CP have paresis rather than paralysis, and can move the body, but with limited control.
Cognitive Ability	The ability to think, learn, and problem solve. There is a variable range of cognitive ability with CP, as some people with CP have normal or above average learning ability, while others have substantial learning impairments.
Congenital	A condition that is present from birth is considered congenital. Congenital conditions can be caused by genetic changes, hereditary factors, or gestational (pregnancy) difficulties, but most of the time they are unexplained.
Genetic Testing	Genetic testing can identify changes in the genes that could be responsible for symptoms. Some medical conditions that cause neurological problems are caused by genetic changes. When a child has a group of symptoms that could be a genetic syndrome, or when there are several family members who have similar symptoms, genetic testing can identify genes that could be responsible. This can help with understanding risk and with family planning.
Cerebral Dysplasia	Cerebral dysplasia is when some regions in the brain are not normally developed. These patterns can be identified in a brain imaging study, such as a brain MRI, and are sometimes associated with CP.
Hydrocephalus	Excessive fluid in and around the brain, usually resulting from brain malformations such as cerebral dysplasia. Hydrocephalus can cause problems such as an enlarged head, excessive drowsiness, or even loss of consciousness. There are treatments for hydrocephalus, including removal of the fluid, shunt placement, and surgery.

