

## CEREBRAL PALSY



### What is Cerebral Palsy?

Cerebral Palsy is a condition in which impairment to the immature brain affects movement, posture and coordination. The condition can occur before, during or after birth, but depending upon severity may not become obvious until early childhood. Cerebral Palsy is a wide-ranging condition and can affect people in many different ways.

Cerebral Palsy is not progressive - the condition itself does not become more severe as the child gets older, although some of the effects on the body may become more noticeable and function may deteriorate.

There is no cure for Cerebral Palsy. If children are positioned well from an early age and encouraged to move in a way that helps them to improve their posture and muscle control, they can be supported to develop and achieve more independence for themselves. There are also a number of therapies, which may be beneficial for some individuals.

<http://www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/z-therapies/occupational-therapy>

### How an Occupational Therapist may help...

Occupational Therapy (OT) can help a child/young person with Cerebral Palsy participate in the activities within their daily lives that they need to do and/or want to do. Working closely with families and schools, an OT may provide any of the following interventions depending on the individual's needs and goals:

- Adaptation advice - environmental advice and/or equipment for both home and school/nursery.
- Health and safety advice and management of risk.
- Child / young person specific moving and handling advice.
- Postural management e.g. specialist seating.
- Self-care skills- strategies, equipment and positioning.
- Sensory modulation and integration- to help attention and possible difficulties with sensory sensitivities.
- Specialist equipment - for personal needs such as toileting and bathing .
- Upper limb orthotics/hand splinting.

### **Case Example**

Jack is a 7 year old boy who was born with Cerebral Palsy which affected the left side of his body. He was referred to the OT service due to having difficulties dressing himself and using cutlery during mealtimes. OT recommended that Jack be provided with a supportive chair to help him to sit in an upright position during mealtimes and to sit to be able to fasten buttons and zips on his own clothing.

OT also provided advice on how Jack could use his two hands together in order for him to put on a school shirt and pull up his own trousers. OT recommended different and fun activities to encourage Jack's two hands to work together and also help his fine motor skills to help him manipulate fastenings. In the meantime, OT recommended that Jack wear a polo shirt and elastic waisted trousers. OT set goals with Jack and his family, provided advice and ensured the equipment was provided for both home and school.

Jack practiced the activities at both home and school to help his fine motor and bilateral skills on a daily basis. Jack also began to do more aspects of the dressing tasks with reduced support from adults. Jack was discharged from the service and he and his family were invited to re-refer him when they needed advice on a different skill or activity of Jack's daily life.

**Useful Contacts**

- <http://www.cerebra.org.uk/> - Charity that offers information, support and various services that parents have told us help them.
- <http://www.reach.org.uk/reachcms/> Association for Children with Upper Limb Deficiency.
- <http://www.scope.org.uk> - Charity for individuals with cerebral palsy.

**Relevant Occupational Therapy Home Programmes available for members on the website**

- Upper limb
- Fine motor skills
- Self care
- Equipment
- Bilateral skills