

Athetosis

Athetosis leads to difficulty in controlling and co-ordinating movement. Athetoid is the word used for the uncontrolled movements that occur in this type of cerebral palsy.

It results from damage to the basal ganglia, which is part of the midbrain.

Athetoid (or Dyskinetic) cerebral palsy affects approximately 10% of people who have cerebral palsy. It was once common, as a result of blood type incompatibility, but is now much more rarely seen.

People with athetoid cerebral palsy have involuntary writhing movements, they often seem to be constantly in motion and sometimes have difficulties with speech, known as dysarthria, as their muscle tone changes from floppy to tense.

These movements will often affect the hands, feet, arms and legs. Sometimes the muscles in a persons face or tongue will be affected, causing problems with saliva loss and speech. The writhing movements will often increase during stressful times, and will usually disappear while sleeping.

Children and babies with athetoid cerebral palsy often have very weak muscles or feel floppy when carried. A lack of control is often most noticeable when the child starts to make voluntary movements and it is sometimes noted that they spend very little time in symmetrical postures.

Ataxia

Ataxic cerebral palsy is the least common form of cerebral palsy. People with ataxic cerebral palsy usually have a disturbed sense of balance and depth perception. They often have low muscle tone (hypotonic), a "staggering", wide based walk and unsteady hands. Speech is often monotonal and facial expressions are reduced.

Ataxia only accounts for 5 - 10% of people with cerebral palsy.

Ataxia results from damage to the cerebellum, the brain's major centre for balance and co-ordination, which is located at the back of the head just above where the neck meets the skull.

Babies with Ataxic cerebral palsy are usually floppy when they are carried and take a long time to sit up and stand. Their hand skills are uncoordinated, as are their leg movements when they first start to play.

People with Ataxic cerebral palsy tend to be physically unadventurous initially because of poor balance but they usually find ways to function well.