

GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING DISABILITIES

SIGNS PRESENT AT OR SOON AFTER BIRTH

| IF THE CHILD HAS THIS | AND ALSO THIS | HE MAY HAVE |
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| born weak or floppy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often a difficult birth or will not suck born blue and limp or born before 9 months and very small | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cerebral palsy developmental delay |
| slow to begin to lift head or move arms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> round face slant eyes thick tongue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Down syndrome hypothyroidism |
| does not suck well or chokes on milk or food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> small head, or small top part of head none of above | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> microcephalia (small brain) mental slowness developmental delay for other reasons |
| one or both feet turned in or back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pushes milk back out with tongue or will not suck cannot suck well chokes or milk comes out nose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cerebral palsy check for cleft palate possibly severe mental slowness |
| bag or dark lump on back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no other signs hands weak, stiff or clubbed some joints stiff, in bent or straight positions dark lump on back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> club foot arthrogryposis spina bifida |
| head too big; keeps growing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clubbed feet or feet bend up too far or feet lack movement and feeling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spina bifida (sometimes no 'bag' is seen, but foot signs may be present) |
| upper lip and/or roof of mouth incomplete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'setting sun' eyes like this increasing mental and/or physical disability blindness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hydrocephalus (water on the brain) At birth, this is usually a sign of spina bifida. in an older child, possibly tapeworm in brain, or a brain tumor |
| birth deformities, defects, or missing parts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty feeding later, speech difficulties | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cleft lip (hare lip) and cleft palate |
| abnormal stiffness or position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> birth deformities, defects, or missing parts (may or may not be associated with other problems) from birth some muscles weak some joints stiff head control and mind normal Muscles tighten more in certain positions may grip thumb tightly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See <ul style="list-style-type: none"> birth defects amputations Down syndrome developmental delay arthrogryposis spastic cerebral palsy Note: muscle tightness (spasticity) usually does not appear until weeks or months after birth. |

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| one arm weak or in strange position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not move the arm much holds it like this | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erb's palsy (weakness from damage to nerves in shoulder during birth) |
| dislocated hip at birth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> leg on same side often affected On opening legs like this, leg pops into place or does not open as far. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hemiplegic (one-sided) cerebral palsy dislocated hip from birth (often both hips) may be present with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spina bifida Down syndrome arthrogryposis Also see p. 156. |
| slow to respond to sound or to look at things | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may be due to one or a combination of problems) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for signs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developmental delay cerebral palsy blindness deafness |

SIGNS IN CHILDREN

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| slower than other children to do things (roll, sit, use hands, show interest, walk, talk) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> slow in most or all areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> round face slant eyes single deep crease in hand movements and response slow skin dry and cool hair often low on forehead puffy eyelids has continuous strange movements or positions, and/or stiffness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmental delay, check for signs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Down syndrome hypothyroidism cerebral palsy also check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> blindness deafness malnutrition |
| does not respond to sounds, does not begin to speak by age 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may respond to some sounds but not others Check for ear infection (pus). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deafness severe developmental delay (with or without deafness) severe cerebral palsy |
| IF THE CHILD HAS THIS All or part of body makes strange, uncontrolled movements. | AND ALSO THIS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins suddenly, child may fall or lose consciousness child is normal for more normal between seizures slow sudden, or rhythmic movements, fairly continuous (except in sleep); no loss of consciousness | HE MAY HAVE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> epileptic seizures (Pattern varies a lot in different children—or even in the same child.) athetoid cerebral palsy (Note: Seizures and cerebral palsy may occur in the same child.) |
| Body, or parts of it, stiffens when in certain positions: poor control of some or all movements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> different positions in different children Body may stiffen backward and legs cross. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spastic cerebral palsy |

PARTS OF BODY WEAK OR PARALYZED

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| floppy or limp weakness in part or all of body no loss of feeling in affected parts no spasticity (muscles that tighten without control) normal at birth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually begin with a 'bad cold' and fever before age 2 irregular pattern of parts weakened. Often one or both legs—sometimes arm, shoulder, hand, etc. begins little by little and steadily gets worse about the same on both sides of body often others in the family also have it Paralysis starts in legs and moves up; may affect whole body. or pattern of paralysis variable lump on back (See p. 57.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio muscular dystrophy muscular atrophy tick paralysis Guillain-Barré paralysis (usually temporary) paralysis from pesticides, chemicals, foods (strychnine) tuberculosis of spine |
| floppy or limp weakness usually some loss of feeling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> one or both hands or feet develops slowly in older child. Gets worse and worse. born with bag on back (Look for scar) feet weak, often without feeling usually from back or neck injury weakness, loss of feeling below level of injury may or may not have muscle spasms loss of bladder and bowel control injury to nerves going to one part of body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> leprosy spina bifida spinal cord injury paraplegia (lower body) quadriplegia (upper and lower body) hand weakness sometimes caused by using crutches wrongly |

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| with stiffness usually or spasticity of muscles no loss of feeling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually affects body in one of these patterns 1. one side 2. both legs 3. whole body Muscles tighten and resist movement because of joint pain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1: cerebral palsy (stroke, usually older persons) 2 and 3: cerebral palsy occasional other causes |
| JOINT PAIN one or more painful joints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gradually with or without fever gradually gets worse, but there are better and worse periods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> juvenile arthritis other causes of joint pain See chart on joint pain. |

WALKS WITH DIFFICULTY OR LIMPS

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| dips to one side with each step | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> one leg often weaker and shorter usually begins age 4 to 8 may complain of knee pain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio cerebral palsy dislocated hip damaged hip joint |
| walks with knees pressed together | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscle spasm and tightness upper body little affected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spastic diplegic or paraplegic cerebral palsy |
| stands and walks with knees together and feet apart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> feet less than 3" apart at age 3 feet more than 3" apart at age 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> normal from ages 2 to 12 knock-kneed |
| walks awkwardly with one foot tiptoe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscle spasms and poor control on that side. Hand on that side often affected. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hemiplegic cerebral palsy (stroke in older persons) |
| walks awkwardly with knees bent and legs usually separated | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> jerky steps, poor balance gradually, uncontrolled movements that may cause falling slow 'drunken' way of walking learns to walk late and falls often | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> athetoid cerebral palsy poor balance (ataxia) — often with cerebral palsy Down syndrome hypothyroidism |
| walks with both feet tiptoe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weakness, especially in legs and feet gradually gets worse and worse legs and feet stiffen (spasticity of muscle) no other problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscular dystrophy spastic cerebral palsy normal? (some normal children at first walk on tiptoes) |

| IF THE CHILD HAS THIS | AND ALSO THIS | HE MAY HAVE |
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| walks with hard(s) pushing thigh(s) or with knee(s) bent back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> weak thigh muscle difficulty lifting leg | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio muscular dystrophy arthritis (joint pain) other causes of muscle weakness |
| Foot hangs down weakly (foot drop). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child lifts foot high with each step so that it will not drag. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio spina bifida muscular dystrophy muscular atrophy nerve or muscle injury other cause of weakness |
| dips from side to side with each step | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> due to muscle weakness at side of hips, or both | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio cerebral palsy spina bifida Down syndrome muscular dystrophy child who stays small arthrogryposis dislocated hips (may occur with any of the above) |
| walks with one (or both) hip, knee, or ankle that stays bent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> joints cannot be slowly straightened when child relaxes (see page 79). Joints can gradually be straightened when child relaxes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> contractures (shortened muscles) joined or fused joints may be secondary to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio joint infection other causes spasticity, often cerebral palsy |
| Knees wide apart when feet together (bow legs). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> under 18 months old Any combination of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joints look big or thick. Child is short for age. Bones weak, bent, or break easily. Arms and legs may seem too short for body, or 'out of proportion'. Belly and butt stick out a lot. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often normal Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rickets (lack of vitamin D and sunlight) brittle bone disease children who stay very short (dwarfism) hypothyroidism Down syndrome dislocated hips |
| flat feet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no pain or other problems Pain may occur in arch of foot. Deformity may get worse. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> normal in many children may be problems in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cerebral palsy polio spina bifida Down syndrome |

BACK CURVES AND DEFORMITIES

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| sideways curve of backbone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When child bends over, look for a lump on one side. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'scoliosis'—may occur alone or as complication of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio cerebral palsy muscular dystrophy spina bifida other physical disability |
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|---|---|--|
| sway back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> belly often sticks out may be due to contractures here, or weak stomach muscles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'lordosis'—may occur in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio spina bifida cerebral palsy muscular dystrophy Down syndrome hypothyroidism child who stays small many other disabilities |
| rounded back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> starts slowly and without pain often family history of tuberculosis may lead to paralysis of lower body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'kyphosis'—often occurs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arthritis spinal cord injury severe polio brittle bone disease tuberculosis of the spine |
| hard, sharp bend of or bump in backbone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> present at birth sometimes only a soft or slightly swollen area over spine weakness and loss of feeling in feet or lower body | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spina bifida ('sack on the back') |

OTHER DEFORMITIES

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| missing body parts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> born that way accidental or surgical loss of limbs (amputation) gradual loss of fingers, toes, hands, or feet, often in persons who lack feeling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> born with missing or incomplete parts amputations osteomyelitis (bone infections) sometimes seen with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> leprosy (hands or feet) spina bifida (feet only) |
| hand problems (For hand problems from birth, see p. 305.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> floppy paralysis (no spasticity) without care may lead to contractures so that fingers cannot be opened uncontrolled muscle tightness (spasticity) strange movements or hand in tight fist burn scars and deformities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may occur with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio muscular dystrophy muscular atrophy spinal cord injury (at neck level) leprosy damage to nerves or cords of arms All may lead to contractures. spastic cerebral palsy may lead to contractures burns |
| clubbing or bending of feet (For club feet from birth, see p. 114.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may begin as floppy weakness and become stiff from contractures, if not prevented | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may occur with many physical disabilities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio cerebral palsy spina bifida muscular dystrophy arthritis spinal cord injury |

DISABILITIES THAT OFTEN OCCUR WITH OR ARE SECONDARY TO OTHER DISABILITIES

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| Developmental delay: child slow to learn to use her body or develop basic skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> caused by slow or incomplete brain function or by severe physical disability, or both caused by overprotection: treating children like babies when they could do more for themselves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often seen in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mental slowness cerebral palsy severely or multiply disabled children some delay can occur with almost any disability |
| Contractures joints that no longer straighten because muscles have shortened Joints will not straighten. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually due to muscle weakness or spasticity Often, muscles that pull a joint one way are much weaker than those that pull it the other way (muscle imbalance). sometimes due to scarring from burns or injuries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often secondary to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio cerebral palsy spina bifida arthritis muscular dystrophy Erb's palsy amputations leprosy burns |
| Behavior problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may come from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> brain damage difficulty understanding things overprotection difficult home situation (Some children with epilepsy from brain damage may pull out hair, bite themselves, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> behavior problems common with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> mental slowness seizures (epilepsy) cerebral palsy and for emotional reasons, with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> spinal cord injury muscular dystrophy deafness learning disability |
| Slow to learn certain things only; otherwise intelligent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often over-active or nervous sometimes behavior problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learning disability |
| Speech and communication problems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> often, but not always, due to deafness or mental slowness (or both) Some children can hear well and are but still cannot speak. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may occur with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deafness developmental delay cerebral palsy Down syndrome hypothyroidism children who stay small brittle bone disease cleft lip and palate (Deafness may occur together with these and other disabilities.) |

| Other problems that sometimes occur secondary to other disabilities (Some of these we have already included in this chart.) | Main disability | Common secondary disabilities |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cerebral palsy many disabilities with paralysis persons who have lost feeling: leprosy, spinal cord injury, spina bifida | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> blindness deafness seizures spinal curve pressure sores osteomyelitis (bone infection) loss of urine and bowel control |