

GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING DISABILITIES

SIGNS PRESENT AT OR SOON AFTER BIRTH

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE
born weak or floppy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> often a difficult birth delayed breathing 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"> small head, or small top part of head none of above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Down syndrome hypothyroidism microcephalia (small brain) mental slowness developmental delay for other reasons
does not suck well or chokes on milk or food 	<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
one or both feet turned in or back 	no other signs	club foot
bag or dark lump on back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hands weak, stiff or clubbed some joints stiff, in bent or straight positions dark lump on back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arthrogryposis spina bifida
head too big; keeps growing 	may develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eyes like 'setting sun' 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
upper lip and/or roof of mouth incomplete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty feeding later, speech difficulties 	cleft lip (hare lip) and cleft palate
birth deformities, defects, or missing parts 	may or may not be associated with other problems	See <ul style="list-style-type: none"> birth defects amputations Down syndrome developmental delay
abnormal stiffness or position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from birth some muscles weak some joints stiff head control and mind normal 	arthrogryposis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muscles tighten more in certain positions. may grip thumb tightly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spastic cerebral palsy Note: muscle tightness (spasticity) usually does not appear until weeks or months after birth.

SIGNS PRESENT AT OR SOON AFTER BIRTH (Continued)

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE
one arm weak or in strange position 	does not move the arm much holds it like this leg on same side often affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Erb's palsy (weakness from damage to nerves in shoulder during birth) hemiplegic (one-sided) cerebral palsy
dislocated hip at birth leg held differently, shorter; flap covers part of vulva 	On opening legs like this, leg 'pops' into place or does not open as far. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	may be due to one or a combination of problems	Check for signs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> developmental delay cerebral palsy blindness deafness

SIGNS IN CHILDREN

slower than other children to do things (roll, sit, use hands, show interest, walk, talk) 	slow in most or all areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> round face slant eyes single deep crease in hand <ul style="list-style-type: none"> movements and response slow skin dry and cool hair often low on forehead puffy eyelids 	Developmental delay, check for signs of: Down syndrome hypothyroidism
has continuous strange movements or positions, and/or stiffness 		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 	may respond to some sounds but not others Check for ear infection (pus).	Check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> deafness severe developmental delay (with or without deafness) severe cerebral palsy

SIGNS IN CHILDREN (Continued)

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE
All or part of body makes strange, uncontrolled movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins suddenly, child may fall or lose consciousness child is normal (or more normal) between seizures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> epileptic seizures (Pattern varies a lot in different children—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. 	spastic cerebral palsy

PARTS OF BODY WEAK OR PARALYZED

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 began with a 'bad cold' and fever before age 2 irregular pattern of parts weakened. Often one or both legs—sometimes arm, shoulder, hand, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins little by little and steadily gets worse about the same on both sides of body often others in the family also have it 	polio muscular dystrophy muscular atrophy
floppy or limp weakness usually some loss of feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paralysis starts in legs and moves up; may affect whole body. or pattern of paralysis variable lump on back (See p. 57.)	tick paralysis Guillain-Baré paralysis (usually temporary) paralysis from pesticides, chemicals, foods (lathyrism) 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	leprosy spina bifida spinal cord injury paraplegia (lower body) quadriplegia (upper and lower body) hand weakness sometimes caused by using crutches wrongly

PARTS OF BODY WEAK OR PARALYZED (Continued)

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE
weakness usually with stiffness or spasticity of muscles no loss of feeling	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 (or stroke, usually older persons) 2 and 3: cerebral palsy occasional other causes JOINT PAIN (many causes—see below)

JOINT PAIN

one or more painful joints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins with or without fever gradually gets worse, but there are better and worse periods 	juvenile arthritis other causes of joint pain See chart on joint pain.
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WALKS WITH DIFFICULTY OR LIMPS

dips to one side with each step 	one leg often weaker and shorter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually begins age 4 to 8 may complain of knee pain 	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 	spastic diplegic or paraplegic cerebral palsy
stands and walks with knees bent and feet apart no other problems 	feet less than 3" apart at age 3 feet more than 3" apart at age 3	normal from ages 2 to 12 knock-kneed
walks awkwardly with one foot tiptoe 	muscle spasms and poor control on that side. Hand on that side often affected.	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 sudden, uncontrolled movements that may cause falling slow 'drunken' way of walking learns to walk late and falls often 	athetoid cerebral palsy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	muscular dystrophy spastic cerebral palsy normal? (some normal children at first walk on tiptoes)

WALKS WITH DIFFICULTY OR LIMPS (Continued)

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE
walks with thighs(s) or hand(knee)s pushing back 	weak thigh muscle difficult leg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio muscular dystrophy arthritis (joint pain) other causes of muscle weakness
Foot hangs down weakly (foot drop). 	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 	due to muscle weakness at side of hips, or both dislocated hips, or double 	<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 	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). Waddles or dips from side to side (if he walks). 	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. 	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 	no pain or other problems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pain may occur in arch of foot. Deformity may get worse. 	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

sideways curve of backbone 	When child bends over, look for a lump on one side. 	'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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BACK CURVES AND DEFORMITIES (Continued)

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE
sway back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> belly often sticks out may be due to contractures here, or weak stomach muscles 	'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 	'kyphosis'—often occurs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> arthritis spinal cord injury severe polio brittle bone disease
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 	tuberculosis of the spine spina bifida ('sack on the back')

OTHER DEFORMITIES

missing body parts 	born that way accidental or surgical loss of limbs (amputation) 	born with missing or incomplete parts amputations
hand problems (For hand problems from birth, see p. 305.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 clubbing of feet from birth, see p. 114.) 	may begin as floppy weakness and become stiff from contractures, if not prevented 	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

Developmental delay: child slow to learn to use her body or develop basic skills 	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	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 	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 	may come from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> brain damage difficultly understanding things overprotection difficult home situation (Some children with epilepsy from brain damage may pull out hair, bite themselves, etc.)	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 	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.	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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cerebral palsy many disabilities with paralysis persons who have lost feeling; spina, spina bifida 	Common secondary disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> blindness deafness seizures spinal curve pressure sores osteomyelitis (bone infection) loss of urine and bowel control