

Guide for Identifying Disabilities

CHAPTER

6

This chapter has a chart, 7 pages long, to help you find out what disability a child possibly has, and where to look up that disability in this book.

In the first column of the chart, we list the more noticeable signs of different disabilities. Some of these signs are found in more than one disability. So in the second column we add other signs that can help you tell apart similar disabilities. The third column names the disability or disabilities that are most likely to have these signs. And the fourth column gives the page numbers where you should look in this book. (Where it says *WTND* and then a number, this refers to the page in *Where There Is No Doctor*.)

If you do not find the sign you are looking for in the first column, look for another sign. Or check the signs in the second column.

This chart will help you find out which disabilities a child might have. It is wise to look up each possibility. The first page of each chapter on a disability describes the signs in more detail.

IMPORTANT: Some disabilities can easily be confused. Others are not included in this book. When you are not sure, try to get help from someone with more experience. At times, specific tests or X-rays may be needed to be sure what the condition is.

Fortunately, it is not always necessary to know exactly what disability a child has. For example, if a child has developed weakness in his legs and you are not sure of the cause, you can still do a lot to help him. Read the chapters on disabilities that cause similar weakness, and the chapters on other conditions that the child may have. For this child, you might find useful information in the chapters on contractures, exercises, braces, walking aids or wheelchairs, and many others.

Sometimes it is important to identify the specific disability. Some disabilities require specific medicines or foods—for example, night blindness, rickets, or hypothyroidism. Others urgently need surgery—for example, spina bifida or cleft lip and palate. Others require specific ways of doing therapy or exercises—for example, cerebral palsy. And others need specific precautions to avoid additional problems—for example, spinal cord injury and leprosy. For this reason, it helps to learn as much about the disability as you can. Whenever possible, seek information and advice from more experienced persons. (However, even experts are not always right. Do not follow anyone’s advice without understanding the reasons for doing something, and considering if and why the advice applies to the individual child.)




















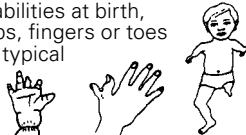
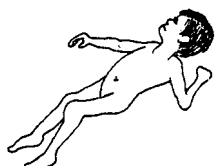

In addition to this chart, 2 other guides for identifying disabilities are in this book:







GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING CAUSES OF JOINT PAIN, p. 130.

GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING AND TREATING DIFFERENT FORMS OF SEIZURES (EPILEPSY), p. 240.







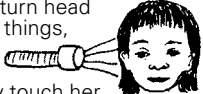

GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING DISABILITIES




SIGNS PRESENT AT OR SOON AFTER BIRTH

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
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 	 87 277
takes longer 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 	279 282
	small head, or small top part of head 	microcephalia (small head) cognitive delay	278
	none of above	developmental delay for other reasons	289
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 	cerebral palsy	87
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cannot suck well • chokes or milk comes out nose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check for cleft palate • possibly severe cognitive delay 	120 277
one or both feet turned in or back 	no other signs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hands weak, stiff or clubbed • some joints stiff, in bent or straight positions 	club foot	114
	dark lump on back	arthrogryposis	122
bag or dark lump on back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clubbed feet • or feet bend up too far • or feet lack movement and feeling 	spina bifida (sometimes no 'bag' is seen, but foot signs may be present)	167
head too big; keeps growing 	may develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eyes like setting sun • increasing mental and/or physical disability • loss of vision 	hydrocephalus (water on the brain)	169
		At birth, this is usually a sign of spina bifida.	167
		in an older child, possibly tapeworm in brain, or a brain tumor	WTND 143
upper lip and/or roof of mouth incomplete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficulty feeding • later, speech difficulties 	cleft lip and cleft palate	120
disabilities at birth, limbs, fingers or toes not typical 	(may or may not be associated with other conditions)	See	119 227 279 287
unusual stiffness or position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from birth • some muscles weak • some joints stiff • typical head control and mind 	arthrogryposis	122
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscles tighten more in certain positions. • may grip thumb tightly 	spastic cerebral palsy Note: muscle tightness (spasticity) usually does not appear until weeks or months after birth.	89

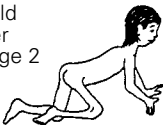








IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
one arm weak or in unusual position 	does not move the arm much holds it like this.  leg on same side often affected	Erb's palsy (weakness from injury to nerves in shoulder during birth) hemiplegic (one-sided) cerebral palsy	127 90
dislocated hip 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.  	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.	155 167 279 122
slow to respond to sound or to look at things 	(may be due to one or a combination of conditions)	Check for signs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developmental delay • cerebral palsy • loss of vision • hearing loss 	290 87 243 257




SIGNS IN CHILDREN WELL PAST BIRTH

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
takes longer than other children to do things (roll, sit, use hands, show interest, walk, talk) 	delayed 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	287 279 282
does not respond to sounds, does not begin to speak by age 3 	has continuous unusual movements or positions, and/or stiffness  may respond to some sounds but not others Check for ear infection (pus).	cerebral palsy also check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of vision • hearing loss • malnutrition 	87 243 257 320
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"> • hearing loss • severe developmental delay (with or without hearing loss) • severe cerebral palsy 	257 283 87
does not turn head to look at things, or reach for things until they touch her 	Eyes may or may not look typical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of vision and/or • severe cognitive delay • severe cerebral palsy 	243 277 87
Eyelids or eyes make quick, jerky, or strange movements. 	Check for one or a combination of these	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of vision • seizures • too much medicine • cerebral palsy • other conditions that affect or cause brain injuries 	243 233 15 87 14


IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>All or part of body makes unusual, uncontrolled movements.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins suddenly, child may fall or lose consciousness typical movements and behaviors between seizures 	<p>epileptic seizures (Pattern varies a lot in different children—or even in the same child.)</p>	233
	<p>slow sudden, or rhythmic movements fairly continuous (except in sleep); no loss of consciousness</p> 	<p>athetoid cerebral palsy (Note: Seizures and cerebral palsy may occur in the same child.)</p>	89
<p>Body, or parts of it, stiffens when in certain positions: difficulty with control of some or all movements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> different positions in different children Body may stiffen backward and legs cross. 	<p>spastic cerebral palsy</p>	89

PARTS OF BODY WEAK OR PARALYZED









IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>floppy or limp weakness in part or all of body</p> <p>no loss of feeling in affected parts</p> <p>no spasticity (muscles that tighten without control)</p> <p>typical at birth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually began with a bad cold and fever before age 2 	<p>polio</p>	59
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> irregular pattern of parts weakened. Often one or both legs—sometimes arm, shoulder, hand, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscular dystrophy muscular atrophy 	109 112
	 <p>Paralysis starts in legs and moves up; may affect whole body.</p>	<p>tick paralysis</p> 	not in book
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> or pattern of paralysis variable 	<p>Guillain-Barré syndrome (usually temporary)</p> <p>paralysis from pesticides, chemicals, foods (lathyrism)</p>	62 15
	<p>lump on back (see p. 57)</p>	<p>tuberculosis of spine</p>	165
<p>floppy or limp weakness</p> <p>usually some loss of feeling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one or both hands or feet develops slowly in older child. Gets worse and worse. 	<p>leprosy</p>	215
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> born with bag on back (Look for scar.) feet weak, often without feeling 	<p>spina bifida</p> 	167
	<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 	<p>spinal cord injury</p>  <p>paraplegia (lower body)</p>  <p>quadriplegia (upper and lower body)</p>	175
	<p>injury to nerves going to one part of body</p>	<p>hand weakness sometimes caused by using crutches wrongly</p>	393

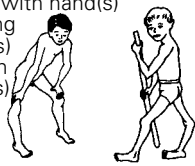
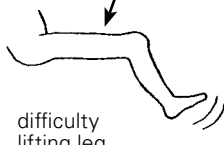


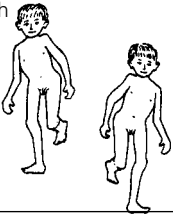




IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
weakness usually with stiffness or spasticity of muscles no loss of feeling	usually affects body in one of these patterns 1.  2.  3.  one side both legs whole body Muscles tighten and resist movement because of joint pain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1: cerebral palsy (or stroke, usually older persons) 2 and 3: cerebral palsy occasional other causes 	87 ↓
		JOINT PAIN (many causes—see below)	130

JOINT PAIN



IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
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	135 ↓
		other causes of joint pain. See chart on joint pain.	130

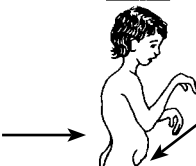



WALKS WITH DIFFICULTY OR LIMPS

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
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 	59 87 155 ↓
		damaged hip joint	157
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	87
stands and walks with knees together and feet apart 	 feet less than 3" apart at age 3  feet more than 3" apart at age 3	typical from ages 2 to 12	113
no other problems		knock-knees	114
walks awkwardly with one foot tiptoe 	muscle spasms and difficulty with control on that side. Hand on that side often affected.	hemiplegic cerebral palsy	90
		(stroke in older persons)	not in book
walks awkwardly with knees bent and legs usually separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jerky steps, difficulty with balance sudden, uncontrolled movements that cause falling 	athetoid cerebral palsy	89
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> slow "drunken" way of walking learns to walk late and falls often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty with balance—often with cerebral palsy Down syndrome hypothyroidism 	90 279 282
walks with both feet tiptoe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weakness, especially in legs and feet gradually gets worse and worse 	muscular dystrophy	109
	legs and feet stiffen (spasticity of muscle)	spastic cerebral palsy	89
	no other problems	typical? (some children at first walk on tiptoes)	292









IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
walks with hand(s) pushing thigh(s) or with knee(s) bent back 	weak thigh muscle  difficulty lifting leg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • muscular dystrophy • arthritis (joint pain) • other causes of muscle weakness 	59 109 135 112
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 	59 167 109 112 35 112
dips from side to side with each step 	due to muscle weakness at side of hips, or double dislocated 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) 	59 87 167 279 109 126 122 155
walks with one (or both) hip, knee, or ankle that stays bent 	joints cannot be slowly straightened when child relaxes (see p. 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 	77 80 59 131 231
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. 	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 	113 125 125 126 282 279 155
flat feet 	no pain or other problems	typical in many children	113
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain may occur in arch of foot. • Deformity may get worse. 	may be part of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cerebral palsy • polio • spina bifida • Down syndrome 	87 59 167 279

BACK CURVES AND DEFORMITIES





IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
sideways curve of backbone (scoliosis) 	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 	59 87 109 167 162

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
sway back (lordosis) 	<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 	59 167 87 109 279 282 126 161
rounded back (kyphosis) 		kyphosis—often occurs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arthritis • spinal cord injury • severe polio • brittle bone disease 	136 175 59 125
hard, sharp bend of or bump in backbone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starts slowly and without pain • often family history of tuberculosis • may lead to paralysis of lower body 	tuberculosis of the spine	165
dark soft lump over 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 	spina bifida ("sack on the back")	167

OTHER DEFORMITIES

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
missing body parts 	born that way 	born with missing or incomplete parts	121
	accidental or surgical loss of limbs (amputation) 	amputations	227
	gradual loss of fingers, toes, hands, or feet, often in persons who lack feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • osteomyelitis (bone infections) sometimes seen with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leprosy (hands or feet) • spina bifida (feet only) 	159 215 167
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 	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.	59 109 112 175 215 127
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncontrolled muscle tightness (spasticity) • strange movements or hand in tight fist 	spastic cerebral palsy	89
	burn scars and deformities 	may lead to contractures	231
clubbing or bending of feet (For club 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 	59 87 167 109 135 175

DISABILITIES THAT OFTEN OCCUR WITH OR ARE SECONDARY TO OTHER DISABILITIES

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>Developmental delay:</p> <p>child takes longer to learn to use her body or develop basic skills</p> 	<p>caused by slow or incomplete brain function or by severe physical disability, or both</p> <hr/> <p>caused by overprotection: treating children like babies when they could do more for themselves</p>	<p>often seen in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive delay • cerebral palsy • children with severe or multiple disabilities <hr/> <p>some delay can occur with almost any disability or lack of stimulation</p>	<p>277 87 283</p> <hr/> <p>287</p>
<p>Contractures</p> <p>joints that no longer straighten because muscles have shortened</p> <p>Joints will not straighten</p> 	<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). <hr/> <p>sometimes due to scarring from burns or injuries</p>	<p>often secondary to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • cerebral palsy • spina bifida • arthritis • muscular dystrophy • Erb's palsy • amputations • leprosy <hr/> <p>burns</p>	<p>59 87 167 135 109 127 227 215</p> <hr/> <p>231</p>
<p>Behavior problems</p> 	<p>may come from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brain injury • difficulty understanding things • overprotection • difficult home situation <p>(Some children with epilepsy from brain injury may pull out hair, bite themselves, etc.)</p>	<p>behavior problems are common with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive delay • seizures (epilepsy) • cerebral palsy <p>and for emotional reasons, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spinal cord injury • muscular dystrophy • hearing loss • learning disability 	<p>277 233 87</p> <hr/> <p>175 109 257 365</p>
<p>Slow to learn certain things, otherwise typical development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often over-active or nervous • sometimes behavior problems 	<p>learning disability</p>	<p>365</p>
<p>Speech and communication difficulty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often, but not always, due to hearing loss or cognitive delay (or both) • Some children can hear well and are  <p>but still cannot speak.</p>	<p>may occur with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hearing loss • developmental delay • cerebral palsy • Down syndrome • hypothyroidism • children who stay small • brittle bone disease • cleft lip and palate <p>(Hearing loss may occur together with these and other disabilities.)</p>	<p>257 287 87 279 282 126 125 120</p>
<p>other disabilities that sometimes occur secondary to other disabilities</p> <p>(Some of these we have already included in this chart.)</p>	<p>Main disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cerebral palsy <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • many disabilities with paralysis <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persons who have lost feeling: leprosy, spinal cord injury, spina bifida 	<p>Common secondary disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vision loss • hearing loss • seizures <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spinal curve <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pressure sores • osteomyelitis (bone infection) • loss of urine and bowel control 	<p>243 257 233</p> <hr/> <p>161</p> <hr/> <p>195 159 203</p>