

Family seems unaware of child's disorder

March 17, 1992

Received approximately 4,000 inquiries.

Breakdown:

- 1,900 from Parents
- 1,300 from Grandparents/Relatives
- 800 from Agencies and Professionals



Ann Landers

Dear Ann Landers: Today I attended a birthday party for a 2-year-old boy. I am just a neighbor, so I can only watch sadly and remain silent.

This child is the pride and joy of his doting grandparents who still carry him around although he weighs more than 30 pounds. He cannot walk without hanging onto something. His little legs appear to be twisted, causing his feet to point outward.

He cannot drink from a cup, not even one with two handles, because he is unable to grasp it. He still uses a bottle and speaks no words. His family says he's "a little slow" and they are not the least bit concerned. This child spends most of his time with his grandparents, who are in their late 60s.

I read the column you printed over a year ago in which you listed some signs of cerebral palsy. I realized that this child has every one of those symptoms. I have been reluctant to approach the child's mother because I'm afraid she will become defensive and tell me to mind my own business.

Meanwhile, this boy is growing older and I'm almost sure that without medical treatment he is going to have a very difficult life. Will you please run the symptoms of cerebral palsy again? Maybe these parents will see them and pay attention.

No Name in California

Dear No Name: The Pathways Awareness Foundation in Chicago publishes an early-warning-signs brochure for parents with babies. This brochure has pictures that show parents how to spot cerebral palsy and other developmental problems. If parents see these signs and talk to their doctor early in a child's life, the condition can be treated. Parents who notice these signs should talk to their pediatrician at once:

- Inability to lift head or push up on arms by 3 months of age.
- Stiff or rigid legs.
- Pushing back or away with head.
- Floppy or limp body posture.
- Stiff, crossed legs at 6 months.
- Using only one side of the body or only the arms to crawl.

When physical problems appear, the baby may also act differently. Parents should also watch for:

- Extreme irritability or crying.
- Failure to smile by 3 months.
- Feeding difficulties.
- Gagging or choking when fed.
- After 6 months of age, tongue pushing soft food out of mouth.

Children with physical challenges can lead more independent, more productive lives, with early help. These children can have high, normal or low intelligence. That's why this brochure and knowing the signs to look for are so important.

For a free copy of the early-warning-signs brochure, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Pathways Awareness Foundation, 123 N. Wacker Drive, Chicago, Ill. 60606.