

Parent Pages

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Know the Warning Signs of Motor Disorders

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Parents are children's first line of defense against movement disorders. Thousands of children in America exhibit early warning signs of developmental disorders. While many pediatricians acknowledge these early warning signs, others are more reluctant to diagnose and then treat conditions such as cerebral palsy in infants. This "wait and see" approach can result in a loss of valuable treatment time. But, parents themselves can take action if they know the warning signs.

Identifying physical and behavioral signs of movement disorders, often as early as 3 months of age, and initiating therapeutic intervention are the most effective ways to minimize the effects of cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities.

The following physical signs are of concern when they are seen most of the time:

















- Poor head control after 3 months
- Stiff or rigid arms or legs
- Pushing away or arching back
- Floppy or limp body posture
- Cannot sit up without support by 8 months
- Uses only one side of body, or only the arms to crawl
- Has difficulty drinking a baby bottle or controlling liquids in the mouth

We support parents' instincts. Because early childhood development doesn't follow a rigid timetable, parents should feel confident about seeking additional medical advice, even after a physician reassures you "nothing is wrong" or "let's just wait and see."

Concerned parents can call Pathways at 1-800-955-2445 or log on to www.pathwaysawareness.org for more information, and should talk to their doctor. The prognosis for children with motor delays and diagnosed cerebral palsy can be positive and optimistic. Early intervention and therapy can make a dramatic difference.

Pathways Awareness Foundation began in 1988 as an educational and informational arm of the Pathways Center for Children, which provides physical therapy for children with movement differences such as cerebral palsy. The Foundation's mission is to heighten public and professional awareness about early detection, early intervention and inclusion of children, youths and adults of all types of abilities.

Watch Your Baby For These Signs

NORMAL DEVELOPMENT		DEVELOPMENTAL PROBLEMS
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- pushes up on arms- holds head up	By 3 Months*	  <ul style="list-style-type: none">- unable to lift head or push up on arms- stiff legs- pushing back with head- constantly flexed hand and stiff leg on one side- difficult to move out of this position
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- sits with support- holds head up- straight back	By 6 Months*	  <ul style="list-style-type: none">- unable to lift head- rounded back- stiff arms- arms held back- stiff, crossed legs
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- sits without support- arms free to reach and grasp	By 8 Months*	   <ul style="list-style-type: none">- poor head control- difficult to get arms forward- arches back—stiff legs- rounded back- poor use of arms for play- stiff legs, pointed toes- poor ability to lift head and back- will not take weight on legs
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- pulls to stand	By 12 Months*	  <ul style="list-style-type: none">- difficulty getting to stand- stiff legs, pointed toes- cannot crawl on hands and knees- uses only one side of body to move
 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- independent standing or walking	By 15 Months*	  <ul style="list-style-type: none">- walks on toes on one side of body- holds arm stiffly and bent- excessive tip-toeing when walking- sits with weight to one side- uses predominantly one hand for play- one leg may lie stiff

* 90% of babies do this before these ages. Remember to correct your child's age for prematurity.