

CEREBRAL PALSY

Produced as part of the *Toolkit for Disability-Inclusive Education - Fiji*

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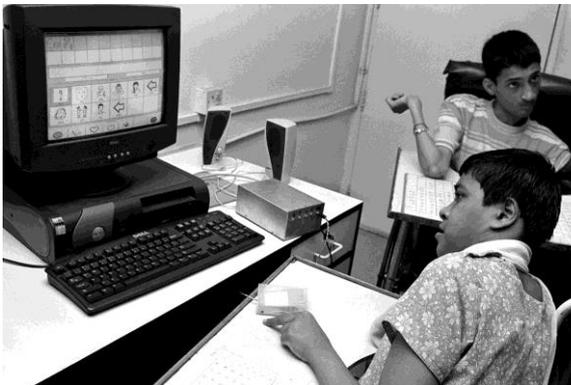


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Every person has the right to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and further education (Fiji Constitution)

All children should be given the opportunity to learn together wherever possible, regardless of difficulties, disabilities or differences (Fiji Ministry of Education Policy on Special and Inclusive Education)

Cerebral Palsy (CP) is usually caused by abnormal brain development, injury or infection during or before birth, which affects movement and co-ordination. It may also result in problems with vision, hearing, seizures, learning, behavior, swallowing and communication.

CP is not caused by witchcraft or bad luck. It cannot be cured by traditional healers.

Children with CP can learn and develop. This is helped by early training such as playing games, talking and singing with your child; and helping your child learn to do things independently such as feeding, handling toys and other objects, and moving around (walking or using an assistive device like crutches or a wheelchair).

At school, many children with CP learn to read, write and do other activities successfully. Many people with CP around the world have completed higher education, have jobs and get married. Rehabilitation with therapists is usually very helpful for children with CP.

Who can help? CWM Hospital children's department, district hospitals, physiotherapists, Community Rehabilitation Assistants, Teachers, and Special Schools. Playful and dedicated parents and caregivers are often able to help the child with CP learn and develop more than anyone else.

Some signs of cerebral palsy are:

- Muscle weakness or stiffness
- Uncontrolled or shaky movements
- Delayed development
- Reduced balance and coordination
- Limited mobility, including the need for a wheelchair or walking frame

CP will present differently in each child. Sometimes it will affect only half of the body, sometimes it will only affect the legs and sometimes it will affect both the legs and arms.

If the child is not encouraged to move, the body can become contracted (bent elbows, hips, knees) and this can be painful and hinder future development and independence.

Additional resource:

“Getting to know cerebral palsy” - training resource for parents. Available in electronic form on the CD in the Toolkit for Disability-Inclusive Education, at schools across Fiji. Also free online: www.cbm.org