It’s Okay to Play

Supporting families living with cerebral palsy to be active

www.cpsport.org
Purpose

This resource has been developed for families and anyone who provides support to children and young people with cerebral palsy. It provides advice and guidance regarding the importance of being active, ideas on how to be active as a family and how to find local opportunities.
Cerebral Palsy Sport

Cerebral Palsy Sport is the country’s leading national disability sports organisation (NDSO) supporting people with cerebral palsy and associated conditions to reach their potential, by putting people with cerebral palsy and their families at the heart of everything we do.

Our vision is to support people with cerebral palsy to reach their life potential through sport and active recreation.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for people with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities through sport, physical activity and active recreation.

Our aim is to raise aspirations, promote inclusion and support people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities to play, participate and enjoy sport and active recreation.

Cerebral Palsy Sport provides a range of opportunities at a local grass roots level. Working with a range of partners from local clubs, schools, the health sector and National Governing Bodies of Sport to provide participation opportunities appropriate for those with cerebral palsy.

To find out about the range of opportunities, and further support offered by CP Sport visit the website: www.cpsport.org
Cerebral Palsy and Associated Physical Impairments

Cerebral palsy is an umbrella term for a number of neurological conditions that affect the development of movement, coordination and posture, causing activity limitation. (Rethlefsen. S.A et al (2010) Classification Systems in Cerebral Palsy).

There is often the misconception that cerebral palsy is a singular condition, however any condition that is as a result of damage to the brain, at any stage of life, can come under the umbrella of cerebral palsy including;

• Traumatic brain injury
• Stroke
• Dystonia

Cerebral palsy is not progressive; the injury to the brain does not change. However, the effects may change over time for better or worse. This is where being active can have a really positive impact.

Cerebral Palsy cannot be cured, however physiotherapy, medication and when appropriate, surgery can often help people with cerebral palsy become more independent.

It is important to remember that no two people will be affected by their cerebral palsy in the same way.
Describing Cerebral Palsy (CP)

Where the neurological damage has occurred will affect the type of CP a person will present with. The image below describes the three main types of CP and the resulting movement.

**SPASTIC:** 80-90%. Most common. Muscles appear stiff and tight. Arises from Motor Cortex damage.

**DYSKINETIC:** 6%. Involuntary movements such as dystonia, athetosis and/or chorea. Arises from damage to the Basal Ganglia.

**ATAXIC:** 5% Shaky movements. Affects balance and sense of positioning in space. Arises from Cerebellum damage.

**MIXED TYPES:** A number of children with CP will have two motor types present e.g. spasticity and dystonia.

These are the 3 most common diagnosis:

- **SPASTIC QUADRIPLEGIA / BILATERAL** Both arms and legs are affected. The muscles of the trunk, face and mouth are often also affected.

- **SPASTIC DIPLEGIA / BILATERAL** Both legs are affected. The arms may be affected to a lesser extent.

- **SPASTIC HEMIPLEGIA / UNILATERAL** One side of the body (one arm and one leg) is affected.

Please note that you can also get monoplegia - one area / limb affected, and Triplegia - three areas affected.

Credit: Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

www.cpsport.org
**Importance of being active**

94% of children and young people who took part in sport and activity delivered by CP Sport in 2019 felt happier as a result, with 85% feeling more confident.

The benefits of taking part in sport and physical activity are well documented. For people with a physical impairment it has many benefits; physically, emotionally and socially.

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<tr>
<th>Physical benefits</th>
<th>Emotional benefits</th>
<th>Social benefits</th>
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<tr>
<td>Better posture</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
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<td>Increased strength</td>
<td>Increased wellbeing</td>
<td>Friendship groups</td>
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<td>Increased movement</td>
<td>Positive thoughts</td>
<td>Development of life skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Able to be active for longer periods</td>
<td>Improved self esteem</td>
<td>Positive impact on communities</td>
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<td>Helps in physiotherapy</td>
<td>Improved self-perception</td>
<td>Breaking down barriers / stigmas</td>
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<td>Increased ability</td>
<td>Tactical thinking</td>
<td>Positive impact on family life</td>
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Being active from a young age will help to develop fundamental skills. These will support their ability to do everyday activities and reach fundamental milestones. Including:

- Moving head in response to sound and light
- Holding small objects such as balls, pens and pencils
- Moving freely and confidently

The positive impact of sport and activity is often not just experienced by the individual, it could inspire their families and friends to be active together, having fun and sharing new experiences.
Being Active as a Family

There are many things that families can do together to be active. This doesn’t always have to be structured sport and activity sessions.

PLAY is hugely important and can be done at home, on holiday, or whilst visiting family members. It does not require lots of room and specialist equipment, it is about developing skills and ability in a fun informal way.

PLAY

• Take on adventure - be creative, use stories and characters to inspire movements.
• Change the equipment you use (bigger, softer, harder) - use a beach ball instead of a tennis ball, or bubbles instead of beanbags.
• Use sensory equipment such as lights and different textures - use what you have such as Christmas lights, tin foil, cardboard boxes.
• Allow them to be on the floor- explore movements and equipment.
• Use music to inspire movement.

If you are unsure of what to do then seek advice from professionals. Speak to Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists or local play workers.
Specialist Equipment
You may already be involved in a sport or activity that requires specialist equipment such as a trike or a RaceRunner. These can also be used to be active as a family. They can be used for a family walk, or a run in the local park.

Support Equipment
There are a number of support aids that individuals may have to use when taking part in sport and physical activity. Again these might change based on activities, confidence levels, and ability.
**Power Wheelchair:**
high performance power chairs designed for challenging environments and everyday usage.

**Sports Chair:**
usually quick and highly manoeuvrable with angled wheels for stability during tight turns.

**Walking Frame:**
for those who normally use walkers for mobility or gait training, for example the frames help with kicking and ball control.

**RaceRunner:**
a three wheeled frame where the athlete is supported by a saddle and body plate.

**Crutches:**
can be used for taking part in sport. Spring loaded crutches can help reduce stress on wrists, elbows and shoulders.
Disability Sport

At Cerebral Palsy Sport we believe in the importance of people being able to try activities that are fun and adapted to meet individual needs. We deliver programmes that will allow people to be active on a regular basis, within their local community.

There is often the misconception that people have to be classified to take part in disability sport. This is not true! Classification is only needed when someone wants to compete in sport.

National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) offer adapted, disability (para) versions of their sport. Below is a list of examples of sports that people with a physical disability can take part in.

- Athletics
- Swimming
- Football
- Golf
- Gymnastics
- Rowing
- Boccia
- New age curling
- Para Taekwondo
- Snooker
- Surfing
- Para badminton
- Tennis
- Rugby
- Shooting
- Snow sports
- Archery
- Bowls
- Climbing
- Horse Riding
- Volleyball
- Weightlifting
- Movement and dance
- Yoga
- Cycling
- Running
- Angling
- Basketball
- Canoeing
- Triathlon
- Fencing
- Goalball
It is important to remember that just because there is an adapted version, it does not mean that you have to take part in this. Being active is about choice, and participating the way each person feels comfortable. For example, tennis clubs may offer wheelchair tennis, however just because you have a physical impairment does not mean you have to use a wheelchair. The same with sitting volleyball, if you can and want to play standing you should be able to do so.

When looking to attend a sport or activity session it is vital as a parent / carer that you feel confident the experience is going to be a positive one for you and your family member. There are a number of steps that can help:

- **Contact the organisation, centre or coach prior to the session to ask any questions you have.** This also provides them with a chance to ask any questions they may have.

- **Take any information you may have from physiotherapists / occupational therapists and provide this to the coaches / leaders at the session.** This will support your child’s development.

- **Encourage your child to try different and new things such as different equipment or tasks.**

- **Be there as a support but step back from being directly involved in the session unless absolutely necessary, coaches will ask for your support when and if needed.**
Facts and Figures

We often hear from children and young people who have cerebral palsy that they feel like they are the only one. Your child may go to a mainstream school where they are the only pupil who has a physical disability, who uses a frame, crutches, or a wheelchair.

We want families and individuals to realise that even though it may seem it, you are not alone.

1 in 400 babies are born with cerebral palsy.

It is estimated that there are 30,000 children and young people with cerebral palsy in the UK (2016).

36% of the disabled population have a mobility issue with the majority of this being cerebral palsy. (Sport England Mapping Disability 2017)
Finding Sport and Activity

As well as Cerebral Palsy Sport there are a number of organisations who can provide information on where and when disability sport and activity sessions are taking place. The below organisations may also have information regarding local disability sport sessions.

National Governing Bodies (NGBs) will often have activity or club finders on their websites.

Active Partnerships will hold information regarding clubs across the county, as well as any wider groups and organisations offering disability or inclusive activities.

Check your local authority website to see if there is an activity finder, or a contact for support and community services.
Further information
For further advice and guidance please contact Cerebral Palsy Sport via info@cpsport.org or visit www.cpsport.org.
There are a number of other organisations who can provide resources and support. The below organisations may also have information regarding local disability sport sessions.

www.activityalliance.org.uk
www.ukcoaching.org/resources
www.youthsporttrust.org
www.sportengland.org/our-work/disability/
www.limbpower.com
www.wheelpower.org.uk
www.dsauk.org
www.britishblindsport.org.uk
www.ukdeafsport.org.uk
www.mencap.org.uk
www.specialolympics.org
www.activepartnerships.org

General enquiries, please contact:

info@cpsport.org

Registered charity number: 1088600