

Cerebral Palsy Among Children

FACT: An estimated 3 to 4 in every 1,000 school-age children in metropolitan Atlanta have cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy is a disorder of movement or coordination caused by an abnormality of the brain. More than 80% of people with cerebral palsy developed it either before they were born or before they were a month old. In many cases, the cause of the brain abnormality is unknown.

About half of the people who have cerebral palsy need to use braces, walkers, wheelchairs, and other assistive devices to help them get around. People with severe cerebral palsy might need special medical care, educational and social services, and other help throughout their lives from both their families and their communities. The average lifetime cost associated with cerebral palsy is about \$921,000 per person (in 2003 dollars).



CDC's Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities Surveillance Program (MADDSP) is one of the few programs in the world that actively tracks the number of children with cerebral palsy in a large, diverse metropolitan area over time.

MADDSP tracks the number of school-age children living in five counties of metro Atlanta who have cerebral palsy, hearing loss, vision impairment, intellectual disabilities, and/or autism spectrum disorders. In 1996, an estimated 3.6 per 1,000 8-year-old children in metro Atlanta, or about 1 in 278, had cerebral palsy. In 2000, the prevalence was an estimated 3.1 per 1,000, or about 1 in 323, 8-year-olds. In 1996 and 2000, respectively, 55% and 60% of children with cerebral palsy also had one or more other developmental disabilities tracked by MADDSP.

MADDSP also allows CDC and other researchers to do special studies to identify risk factors for these disabilities and to find out whether efforts to prevent disabilities have been effective.

Related CDC Activities

- The Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network tracked the number of children with autism spectrum disorders and cerebral palsy in three sites in 2002 and 2004 and four sites in 2006.
- The Epidemiologic Studies of Reproductive and Developmental Outcomes in Denmark are looking at the relationship between the risk of cerebral palsy and exposures such as intrauterine infection during pregnancy and assisted reproductive technology.
- The Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities (MADDS) Follow-up Study of Young Adults followed a subset of children identified by the study who had vision impairment, hearing loss, intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, and/or epilepsy to assess their current functioning and their transition into adulthood, as measured by employment, education after high school, and living arrangements. It also examined their mental and physical health and their lifestyles and behaviors.
 - Using data from the National Health Interview Survey, researchers are examining health status and health care use among children with cerebral palsy.

To read more about CDC's publications related to cerebral palsy, visit www.cdc.gov/cerebralpalsy.

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