

## Health Care Professionals Who May Treat Your Child with Cerebral Palsy

From [www.palsyinfo.com/malpractice/cerebralpalsy.html](http://www.palsyinfo.com/malpractice/cerebralpalsy.html)

### Can cerebral palsy be treated?

Although there is no cure for cerebral palsy, many of the symptoms can be treated and/or managed in ways that will improve many children's functional abilities. Management/treatment needs will vary widely, depending upon the nature and extent of brain damage. In general, optimal care of a child afflicted with cerebral palsy requires the coordination of an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals. These generally include some or all of the following:

A **pediatric physiatrist** specializes in treating children with physical disabilities. Because of his/her special expertise, a pediatric physiatrist is often the "quarterback" of the cerebral palsy treatment team.

A **pediatric neurologist** specializes in treating nervous system disorders in children, including cerebral palsy. The pediatric neurologist is particularly involved in seizure management. Occasionally, a pediatric neurologist may serve as the "quarterback."

A **pediatrician** is required for general pediatric care. Children with cerebral palsy tend to get sick more often than their counterparts, particularly with regard to respiratory tract infections.

An **orthopedist** may be consulted regarding problems with regard to muscle, tendon or bone development, and would be the physician performing any surgery that might be required for those problems.

A **physical therapist**, pursuant to a physician's orders, implements an exercise program designed to improve the child's range of movement and strength of the legs, and teaches the parents how to perform these exercises with their child at home.

An **occupational therapist** performs similar work to a physical therapist, with the areas of concentration being the arms and hands, rather than the legs.

A **speech pathologist** evaluates, diagnoses, and forms a treatment plan as to any communication problems that may be identified.

A **psychologist** or **licensed clinical social worker** may provide counseling to the child and family to help formulate the skills needed to cope with the inevitable stresses and demands presented by a diagnosis of cerebral palsy.

A **case manager** identifies the resources available in the community to assist in the management of patients with cerebral palsy, and coordinates with the family and providers to make sure that the child has access to all of the necessary treatment.