

# HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

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# About cerebral palsy

Definition: cerebral palsy is damage to the brain causing problems with movement and posture, and often communication, feeding/eating, seizures, learning, and behaviour.

- Sometime cerebral palsy affects only one side of the body.
- In most cases, we do not know what causes cerebral palsy.
- Cerebral palsy is not caused by a curse or witchcraft.
- There is no medical cure for cerebral palsy.
  - It is more important to accept the condition and help your child live with it. Try to make your child as independent as possible.
- Cerebral palsy is not contagious.

## Questions to ask:

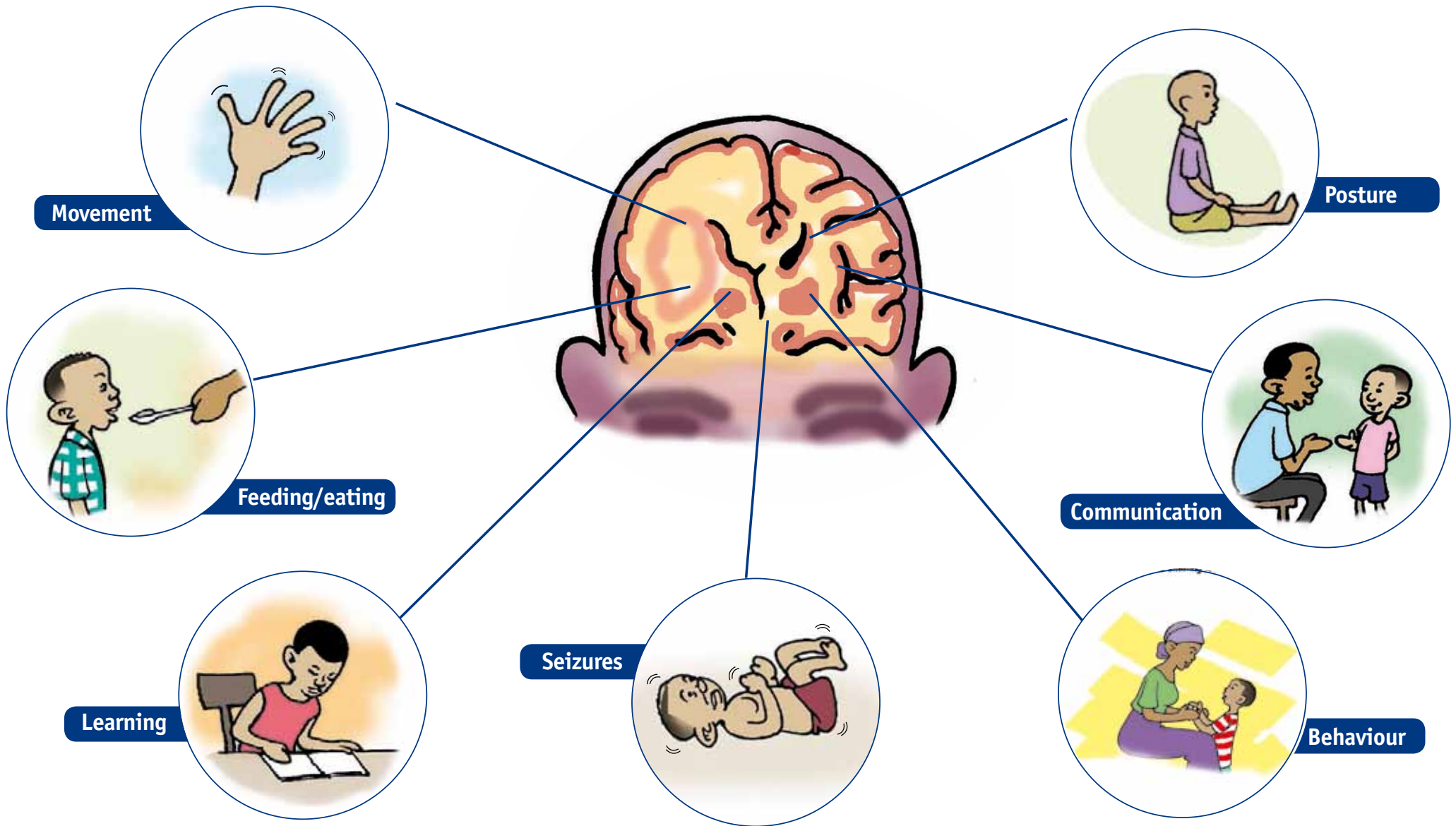
**Why can respiratory problems occur in a child with cerebral palsy?**

**(Possible answer = posture)**

**Why do many children with cerebral palsy suffer from malnutrition?**

**(Possible answer = difficulties with feeding/eating)**

# About cerebral palsy



# Early identification of cerebral palsy

Young babies may show some of these signs:

- **Stiffness**
  - In some positions, like lying on the back, it becomes difficult to bend the baby's body, to dress or cuddle him.
  - Your baby is difficult to handle in some positions, like lying on his back.
- **Floppiness**
  - Your baby's head flops and she cannot lift it. Her arms and legs hang down when she is held in the air. The baby moves too little.
- **Slow development**
  - Learning to lift his head and to sit takes longer than expected, and he may neglect some parts of the body.
- **Poor feeding**
  - Sucking and swallowing is poor. Your baby's tongue pushes the milk and food out. She has difficulty closing her mouth.
- **Unusual behaviour**
  - He may be a crying, irritable baby who sleeps badly. Or he may be a very quiet baby who sleeps too much.

## Question to ask:

**Have you seen any of these conditions before?**

# Early identification of cerebral palsy

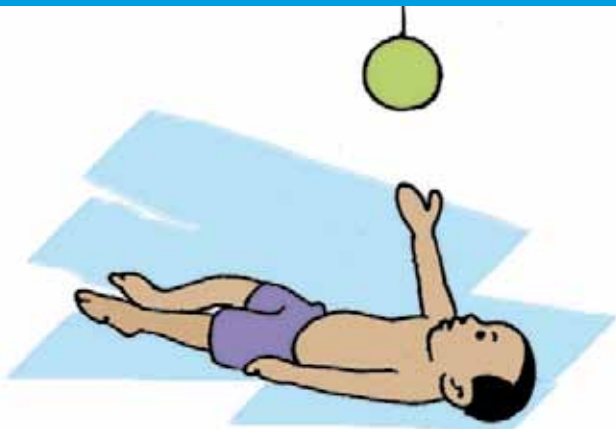
Stiffness



Floppiness



Slow development



Poor feeding



# Early intervention

- Do not delay getting your child helped.
- Get care for your child as early as possible.
- Get your child assessed at a health centre.
- Ask about special places and community projects that help children with disabilities.
- Ask where to find people with special training in helping children with disabilities.
- Treatments happen in the home, not the hospital.
- Parents and caregivers can learn how to take care of children with cerebral palsy at home.

## Question to ask:

**Do you know special places in your district where children with disabilities can be helped (rehabilitation centres)?**

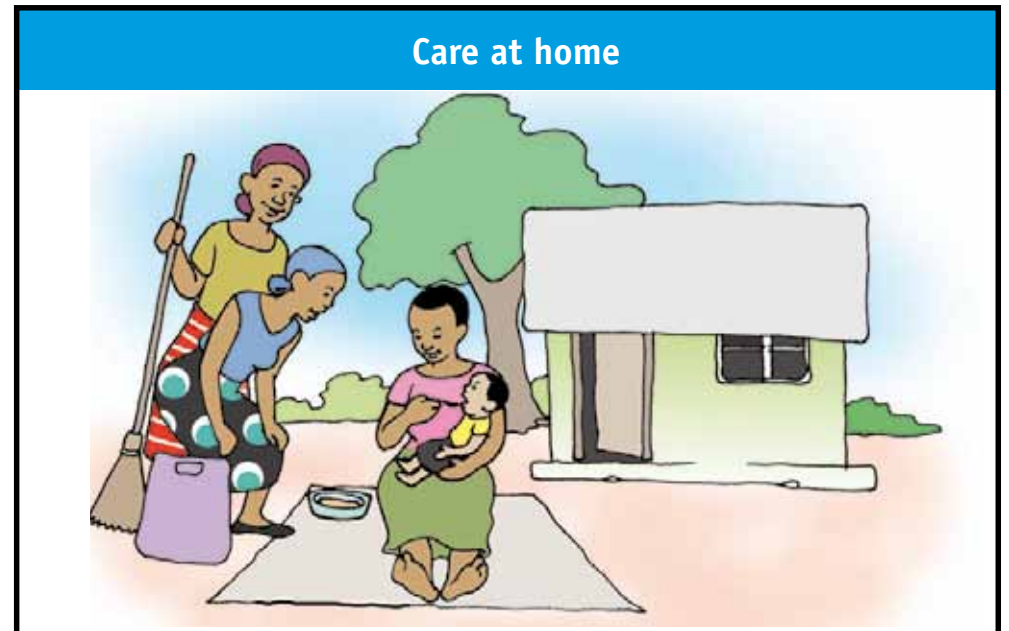
**Do you know where people with special training for children with disabilities work (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, special teachers, language therapists)?**

# Early intervention

Rehabilitation therapist



Care at home





# Communication

- Look, talk, touch, and sing to your child often.
- Tell your child what you are doing.
- Give your child choices:
  - Yes/no, gestures, point, use communication boards, smile.
- Use single words and simple gestures.
- Give time for your child to respond.
- Do not force a child to speak.

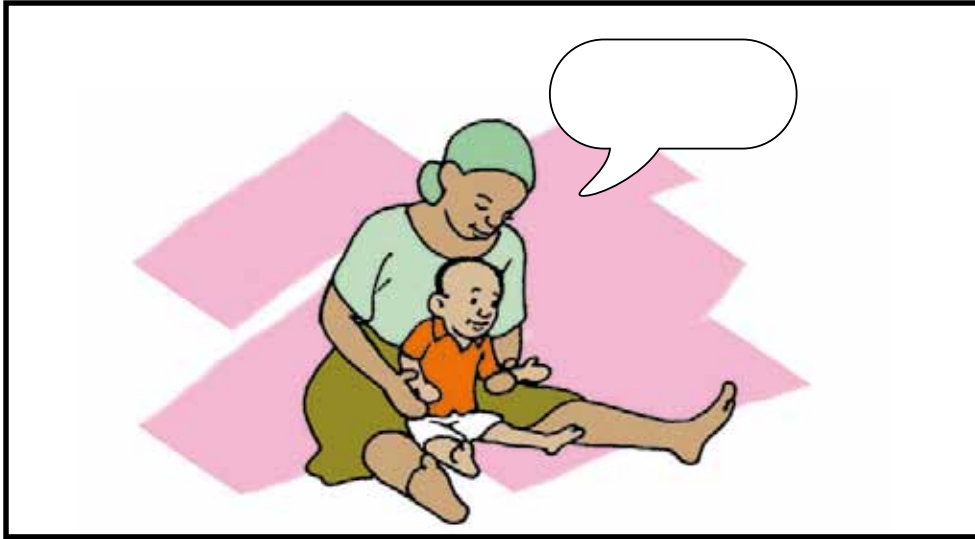
## Question to ask:

**What are different ways of communicating?**

**(Possible answers include: talking, touching, gestures, facial mimicking and body language.)**



# Communication



# Feeding

- Positioning:
  - Hold your child in an upright position.
  - Turn your child's body towards you as far as possible.
  - Stabilise the child's head in a neutral position.
  - Support the jaw.
- Introduce food of different textures:
  - Children with swallowing difficulties may need thicker food.
  - Give small bites of food with a high nutritional value.
- Encourage your child to feed him/herself.

## Question to ask:

**Why do we sometimes use jaw control while feeding a child with cerebral palsy?**

**Can you list some examples of foods of different textures?**

# Feeding

No



Yes



A



B



C



# Positioning

- Carrying your child
  - Carry her in an upright position.
  - Bend his hips and knees.
- Helping your child to lie down
  - **On her stomach:**
    - Place a roll, wedge or cushion under your child.
  - **On his side:**
    - Keep both arms forward.
    - Bend one hip and knee.
- Sitting
  - **Using a special chair:**
    - Keep your child's feet flat on the floor.
    - Keep the bottom level against the back of the chair.

## Question to ask:

**Why is positioning important for children with cerebral palsy?**

**(Possible answers include: avoiding contractures, supports activities, communication and feeding.)**

# Carrying your child

Positioning



Lying



Lying



Sitting in a chair



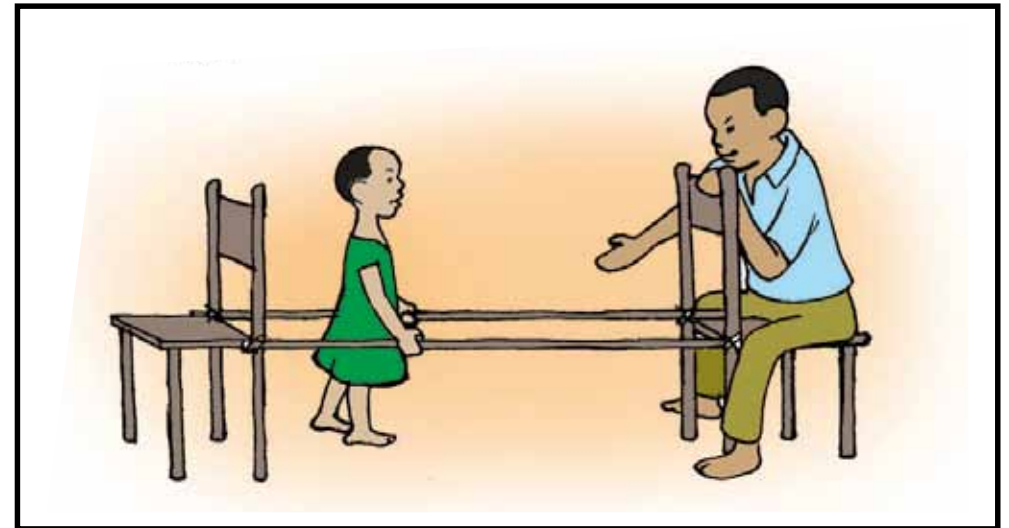
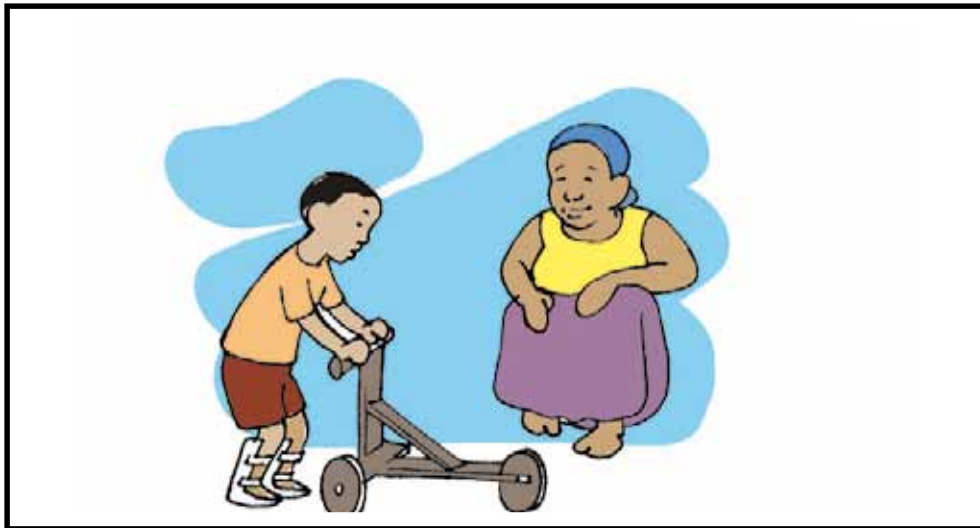
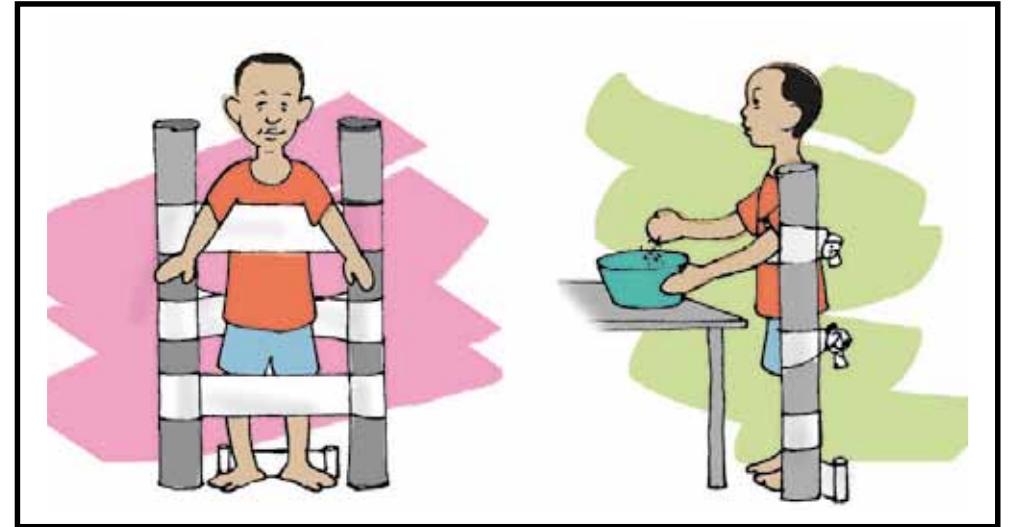
# Standing and walking

- Children need to hold onto something to stand and walk.
- Let them stand holding on to furniture.
- Make simple parallel bars to teach them to walk.
- After your child can pull to stand with help, teach him to do it alone.
- It may be easier for your child to stand from a chair, rather than from the floor.
- Help her to learn the correct movements.
- To take a step, she needs to put her weight on one foot while she lifts the other.
- Many children will take a long time to learn to walk alone. They may need the help of braces or equipment.

## Question to ask:

**Find more ways on how to support standing and walking.**

# Standing and walking





# Daily living activities

- Stimulate your child to do the activity by herself
- Eating and drinking:
  - Let your child try to feed himself.
  - She should sit in a good position alone in a chair or stool.
  - He may need to use a spoon with a thick handle to make it easier to hold.
- Using the toilet:
  - When going to the toilet, encourage your child to help as much as possible during undressing and dressing.
  - Make something, like a bar, for the child to hold onto.
  - Use a box or special chair for her to sit on.

## Question to ask:

**How you can make the handle of a spoon thicker so it is easier for your child to hold?**

**(Possible answer = wrap material around it)**

**Are there any other ways, other than the examples shown in the picture, to support a child with cerebral palsy when using the toilet?**

# Daily living activities

Eating and drinking



Going to the toilet



# Dressing and washing

- Stimulate your child to do the activity by herself
- Dressing:
  - A child can learn to dress lying on his side.
  - Sitting in a corner against the wall can help with balance.
  - Allow your child to hold onto things if needed.
- Washing:
  - Encourage your child to wash himself.
  - When the child learns to wash himself, he may need to hold onto things for support.

## **Question to ask:**

**What other positions for dressing and washing will help your child be as independent as possible?**

# Dressing and washing

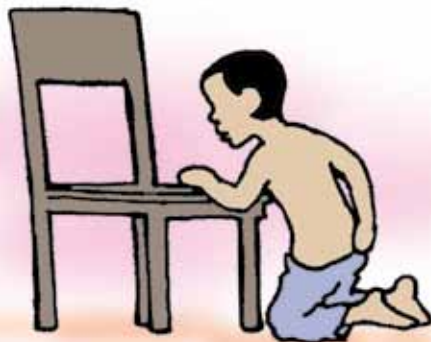
Dressing



Dressing



Dressing



Washing



# Play

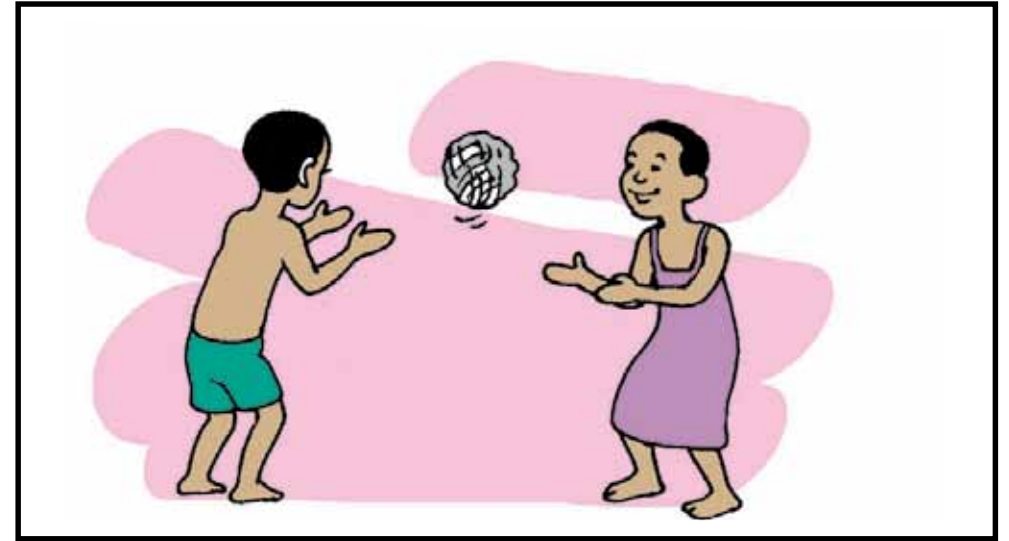
- Play helps your child develop properly.
- Encourage your child to move both her arms together and separately.
- Work on holding toys and releasing them.
- Encourage your child to play in different positions.
- Encourage other children to play with your child.

## Question to ask:

**In what other positions can you encourage your child to play?**

**(Possible answers include: sitting, kneeling, or /standing.)**

# Play



# Seizures

- Learn to recognise possible 'warning signs' that a seizure will begin. These warning signs can include a change in your child's mood, your child being suddenly afraid or suddenly crying.
- During a seizure, protect the child but do not force movements.
  - If needed, lie your child on their side.
  - Do not put anything in the child's mouth.
  - Turn the child's head to one side.
- Go to the clinic for medication and follow-up with the doctor about medications.
- A child with seizures does not have an evil spirit or a curse.

## Question to ask:

**A child who has had a seizure must be seen by a medical doctor. Do you know why?**



# Seizures



# Your child's behaviour

- Your child needs love and attention. A child who feels loved will behave better.
- Make your instructions clear. Don't give too many instructions.
- Stick to the rules. Be consistent.
- Reinforce the behaviour you want. You do this by:
  - Giving a reward after the desired behaviour. This could be a kiss or a snack.
  - Praise the behaviour, not the person.
- Ignore behaviour you do not like.
- Physical punishment does not teach good or correct behaviour.
- Do not spank or beat your child.
- For behaviour you cannot ignore, try "time out". This means taking the child to a safe place where you can see him but away from where the fun/activity is happening.

## Discussion topic:

**Let's discuss the effects that physical punishment could have on a child.**

# Your child's behaviour

Ignore behaviour you do not like



Praise good behaviour



Do not beat your child



# Helping parents to cope

- Take time for yourself.
- Ask a trusted family member or friend to look after your child sometimes.
- Do not hide your child. Take her outside.
- Look for parents with children similar to yours.
- Seek professional help.
- Teach other children to play and care for your child.

## **Question to ask:**

**What challenges do you think parents of children with cerebral palsy face in particular?**

# Helping parents to cope

Look for other families in a similar situation



Teach other children to play with your child



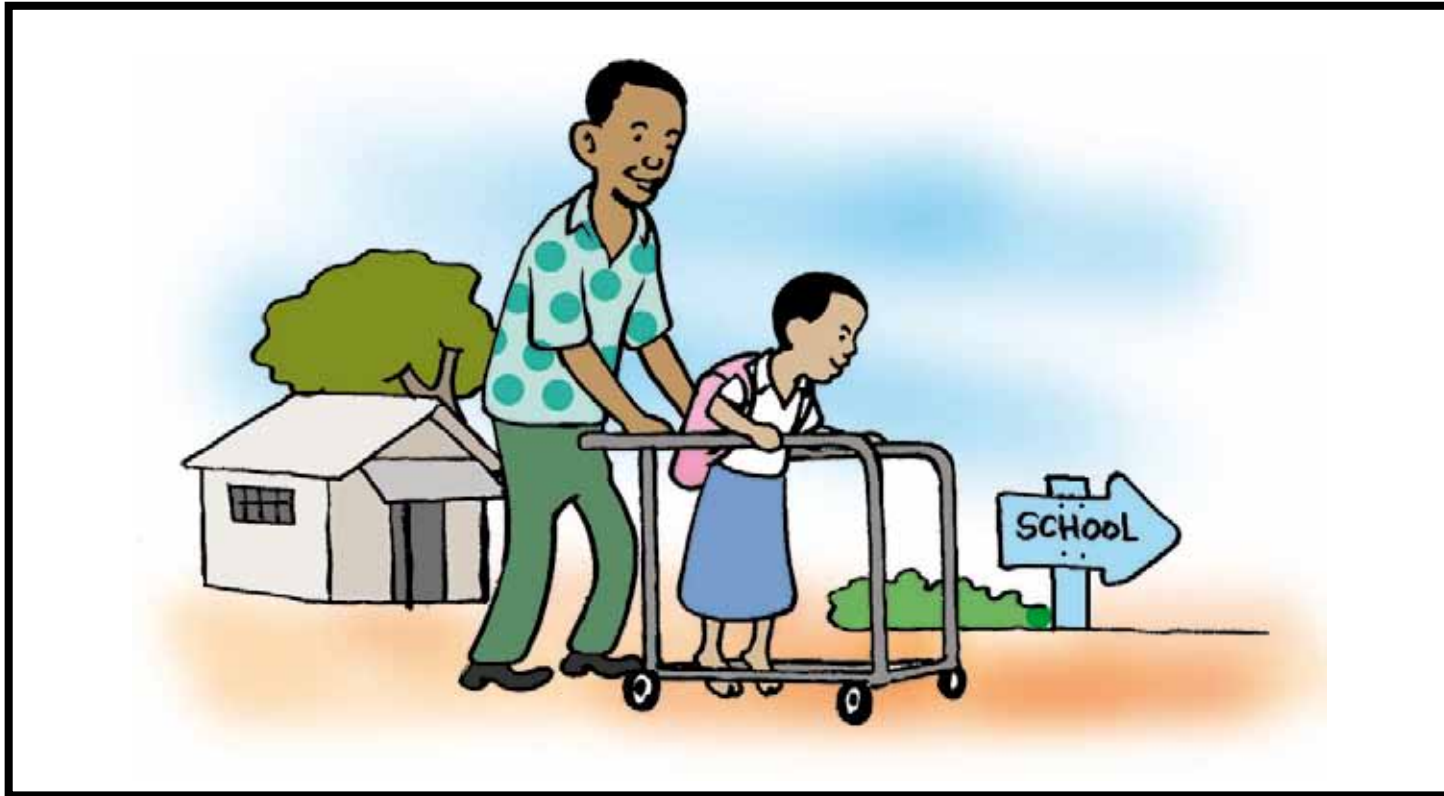
# Going to school

- Children should go to school.
- Talk to your child about what to expect at school.
- Talk to your teacher, your community-based worker, and community leaders so they can help you.
- Ask the teacher to:
  - Seat your child at the front of the class where the teacher can supervise.
  - Encourage other children to assist your child at school.
  - Protect your child from bullying.
- Advise the school on toilet training and other activities with your child.

## Question to ask:

**Do you feel that it is possible for your child to go to school?**

# Going to school





# Social and community activities

- Let your child participate in community activities the same as any child.
- Take your child to social and religious gatherings.
- Let your child play with other children.
- Let your child help in the household.
- Show your community that your child is special and loved.

## **Question to ask:**

**How can parents help their child play with other children?**

# Social and community activities



# HOW YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

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Changing Lives, Changing Communities



Empowering persons with different abilities

