

Guide for Identifying Disabilities

This chapter has a chart, 7 pages long, to help you find out **what disability a child possibly has**, and **where to look up that disability in this book**.

In the **first column** of the chart, we list the more noticeable signs of different disabilities. Some of these signs are found in more than one disability. So in the **second column** we add other signs that can help you tell apart similar disabilities. The **third column** names the disability or disabilities that are most likely to have these signs. And the **fourth column** gives the page numbers where you should look in this book. (Where it says *WTND* and then a number, this refers to the page in *Where There Is No Doctor*.)

If you do not find the sign you are looking for in the first column, look for another sign. Or check the signs in the second column.

This chart will help you find out which disabilities a child might have. It is wise to look up each possibility. **The first page of each chapter on a disability describes the signs in more detail.**

IMPORTANT: Some disabilities can easily be confused. Others are not included in this book. When you are not sure, try to get help from someone with more experience. At times, special tests or X-rays may be needed to be sure what the problem is.

Fortunately, **it is not always necessary to know exactly what disability a child has**. For example, if a child has developed weakness in his legs and you are not sure of the cause, you can still do a lot to help him. Read the chapters on disabilities that cause similar weakness, and the chapters on other problems that the child may have. For this child, you might find useful information in the chapters on polio, *contractures*, exercises, braces, walking aids or wheelchairs, and many others.

Sometimes it is important to identify the specific disability. Some disabilities require specific medicines or foods—for example, night blindness, rickets, or hypothyroidism. Others urgently need surgery—for example, spina bifida or cleft lip and palate. Others require special ways of doing *therapy* or exercises—for example, cerebral palsy. And others need specific precautions to avoid additional problems—for example, spinal cord injury and leprosy. For this reason, it helps to learn as much about the disability as you can. Whenever possible, seek information and advice from more experienced persons. (However, even experts are not always right. Do not follow anyone's advice without understanding the reasons for doing something, and considering **if** and **why** the advice applies to the individual child.)



















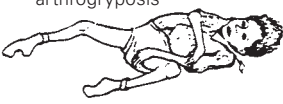

In addition to this chart, 2 other guides for identifying disabilities are in this book:






GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING CAUSES OF JOINT PAIN, p. 130.

GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING AND TREATING DIFFERENT FORMS OF SEIZURES (EPILEPSY), p. 240.








GUIDE FOR IDENTIFYING DISABILITIES




SIGNS PRESENT AT OR SOON AFTER BIRTH

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>born weak or 'floppy'</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> often a difficult birth delayed breathing born blue and limp or born before 9 months and very small 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cerebral palsy developmental delay 	<p>87 277</p>
<p>slow to begin to lift head or move arms</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> round face slant eyes thick tongue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Down syndrome hypothyroidism 	<p>279 282</p>
	<p>small head, or small top part of head</p> 	<p>microcephalia (small brain) mental slowness</p>	<p>278</p>
	<p>none of above</p>	<p>developmental delay for other reasons</p>	<p>289</p>
<p>does not suck well or chokes on milk or food</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> pushes milk back out with tongue or will not suck 	<p>cerebral palsy</p>	<p>87</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot suck well chokes or milk comes out nose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> check for cleft palate possibly severe mental slowness 	<p>120 277</p>
<p>one or both feet turned in or back</p> 	<p>no other signs</p>	<p>club foot</p>	<p>114</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hands weak, stiff or clubbed some joints stiff, in bent or straight positions 	<p>arthrogryposis</p>	<p>122</p>
	<p>dark lump on back</p>	<p>spina bifida</p>	<p>167</p>
<p>'bag' or dark lump on back</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clubbed feet or feet bend up too far or feet lack movement and feeling 	<p>spina bifida (sometimes no 'bag' is seen, but foot signs may be present)</p>	<p>167</p>
<p>head too big; keeps growing</p> 	<p>may develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eyes like 'setting sun' increasing mental and/or physical disability blindness 	<p>hydrocephalus (water on the brain)</p>	<p>169</p>
		<p>At birth, this is usually a sign of spina bifida.</p>	<p>167</p>
		<p>in an older child, possibly tapeworm in brain, or a brain tumor</p>	<p>WTND 143</p>
<p>upper lip and/or roof of mouth incomplete</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> difficulty feeding later, speech difficulties 	<p>cleft lip (hare lip) and cleft palate</p>	<p>120</p>
<p>birth deformities, defects, or missing parts</p> 	<p>(may or may not be associated with other problems)</p>	<p>See</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> birth defects amputations Down syndrome developmental delay 	<p>119 227 279 287</p>
<p>abnormal stiffness or position</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> from birth some muscles weak some joints stiff head control and mind normal 	<p>arthrogryposis</p> 	<p>122</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muscles tighten more in certain positions. may grip thumb tightly 	<p>spastic cerebral palsy</p> <p>Note: muscle tightness (spasticity) usually does not appear until weeks or months after birth.</p>	<p>89</p>










IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>one arm weak or in strange position</p> 	<p>does not move the arm much</p> <p>holds it like this.</p> 	<p>Erb's palsy (weakness from damage to nerves in shoulder during birth)</p>	<p>127</p>
	<p>leg on same side often affected</p>	<p>hemiplegic (one-sided) cerebral palsy</p>	<p>90</p>
<p>dislocated hip at birth</p> <p>leg held differently, shorter; flap covers part of vulva</p> 	<p>On opening legs like this, leg 'pops' into place or does not open as far.</p> 	<p>dislocated hip from birth (often both hips)</p> <p>may be present with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spina bifida • Down syndrome • arthrogryposis <p>Also see p. 156.</p>	<p>155</p> <p>167</p> <p>279</p> <p>122</p>
<p>slow to respond to sound or to look at things</p> 	<p>(may be due to one or a combination of problems)</p>	<p>Check for signs of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developmental delay • cerebral palsy • blindness • deafness 	<p>290</p> <p>87</p> <p>243</p> <p>257</p>




SIGNS IN CHILDREN

<p>slower than other children to do things (roll, sit, use hands, show interest, walk, talk)</p> 	<p>slow in most or all areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • round face • slant eyes • single deep crease in hand 	<p>Developmental delay, check for signs of:</p>	<p>287</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • movements and response slow • skin dry and cool • hair often low on forehead • puffy eyelids 	<p>Down syndrome</p>	<p>279</p>
	<p>has continuous strange movements or positions, and/or stiffness</p> 	<p>hypothyroidism</p>	<p>282</p>
	<p>slow in most or all areas:</p>	<p>cerebral palsy</p> <p>also check for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blindness • deafness • malnutrition 	<p>87</p> <p>243</p> <p>257</p> <p>320</p>
<p>does not respond to sounds, does not begin to speak by age 3</p> 	<p>may respond to some sounds but not others</p> <p>Check for ear infection (pus).</p>	<p>Check for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deafness • severe developmental delay (with or without deafness) • severe cerebral palsy 	<p>257</p> <p>283</p> <p>87</p>
<p>does not turn head to look at things, or reach for things until they touch her</p> 	<p>Eyes may or may not look normal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blindness and/or • severe mental slowness • severe cerebral palsy 	<p>243</p> <p>277</p> <p>87</p>
<p>Eyelids or eyes make quick, jerky, or strange movements.</p> 	<p>Check for one or a combination of these</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blindness • seizures • too much medicine • cerebral palsy • other problems affecting or damaging the brain 	<p>243</p> <p>233</p> <p>15</p> <p>87</p> <p>14</p>


IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>All or part of body makes strange, uncontrolled movements.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins suddenly, child may fall or lose consciousness child is normal (or more normal) between seizures <p>slow sudden, or rhythmic movements; fairly continuous (except in sleep); no loss of consciousness</p> 	<p>epileptic seizures (Pattern varies a lot in different children—or even in the same child.)</p>	<p>233</p>
<p>Body, or parts of it, stiffens when in certain positions: poor control of some or all movements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> different positions in different children Body may stiffen backward and legs cross. 	<p>athetoid cerebral palsy (Note: Seizures and cerebral palsy may occur in the same child.)</p>	<p>89</p>
		<p>spastic cerebral palsy</p>	<p>89</p>

PARTS OF BODY WEAK OR PARALYZED










<p>floppy or limp weakness in part or all of body</p> <p>no loss of feeling in affected parts</p> <p>no spasticity (muscles that tighten without control)</p> <p>normal at birth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually began with a 'bad cold' and fever before age 2 irregular pattern of parts weakened. Often one or both legs—sometimes arm, shoulder, hand, etc. 	<p>polio</p>	<p>59</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins little by little and steadily gets worse about the same on both sides of body often others in the family also have it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscular dystrophy muscular atrophy 	<p>109 112</p>
	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paralysis starts in legs and moves up; may affect whole body. or pattern of paralysis variable <p>lump on back (See p. 57.)</p>	<p>tick paralysis </p> <p>Guillain-Barré paralysis (usually temporary)</p> <p>paralysis from pesticides, chemicals, foods (lathyrism)</p> <p>tuberculosis of spine</p>	<p>not in book</p> <p>62</p> <p>15</p> <p>165</p>
<p>floppy or limp weakness usually some loss of feeling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one or both hands or feet develops slowly in older child. Gets worse and worse. 	<p>leprosy</p>	<p>215</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> born with bag on back (Look for scar.) feet weak, often without feeling 	<p>spina bifida </p>	<p>167</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually from back or neck injury weakness, loss of feeling below level of injury may or may not have muscle spasms loss of bladder and bowel control 	<p>spinal cord injury</p> <p>paraplegia (lower body) </p> <p>quadriplegia (upper and lower body) </p>	<p>175</p>
	<p>injury to nerves going to one part of body</p>	<p>hand weakness sometimes caused by using crutches wrongly</p>	<p>393</p>


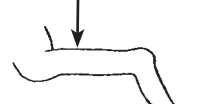


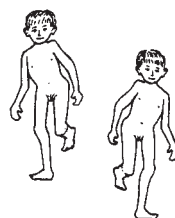





IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
weakness usually with stiffness or spasticity of muscles no loss of feeling	usually affects body in one of these patterns 1.  one side 2.  both legs 3.  whole body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1: cerebral palsy (or stroke, usually older persons) 2 and 3: cerebral palsy occasional other causes 	87
	Muscles tighten and resist movement because of joint pain.	JOINT PAIN (many causes—see below)	130

JOINT PAIN



one or more painful joints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begins with or without fever gradually gets worse, but there are better and worse periods 	juvenile arthritis	135
		other causes of joint pain See chart on joint pain.	130





WALKS WITH DIFFICULTY OR LIMPS

dips to one side with each step 	one leg often weaker and shorter <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually begins age 4 to 8 may complain of knee pain 	Check for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> polio cerebral palsy dislocated hip 	59 87 155
		damaged hip joint	157
walks with knees pressed together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscle spasm and tightness upper body little affected 	spastic diplegic or paraplegic cerebral palsy	87
stands and walks with knees together and feet apart 	 feet less than 3" apart at age 3	normal from ages 2 to 12	113
no other problems 	 feet more than 3" apart at age 3	knock-kneed	114
walks awkwardly with one foot tiptoe 	muscle spasms and poor control on that side. Hand on that side often affected.	hemiplegic cerebral palsy (stroke in older persons)	90 not in book
walks awkwardly with knees bent and legs usually separated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> jerky steps, poor balance sudden, uncontrolled movements that may cause falling <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> slow 'drunken' way of walking learns to walk late and falls often 	athetoid cerebral palsy	89
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> poor balance (ataxia)—often with cerebral palsy Down syndrome hypothyroidism 	90 279 282
walks with both feet tiptoe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weakness, especially in legs and feet gradually gets worse and worse 	muscular dystrophy	109
	legs and feet stiffen (spasticity of muscle)	spastic cerebral palsy	89
	no other problems	normal? (some normal children at first walk on tiptoes)	292

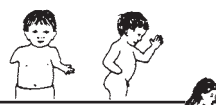





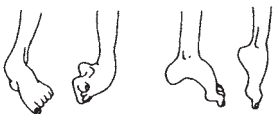
IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
<p>walks with hand(s) pushing thigh(s) or with knee(s) bent back</p> 	<p>weak thigh muscle</p>  <p>difficulty lifting leg</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • muscular dystrophy • arthritis (joint pain) • other causes of muscle weakness 	<p>59 109 135 112</p>
<p>Foot hangs down weakly (foot drop).</p> 	<p>Child lifts foot high with each step so that it will not drag.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • spina bifida • muscular dystrophy • muscular atrophy • nerve or muscle injury • other cause of weakness 	<p>59 167 109 112 35 139</p>
<p>dips from side to side with each step</p> 	<p>due to muscle weakness at side of hips, or double dislocated hips, or both</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • cerebral palsy • spina bifida • Down syndrome • muscular dystrophy • child who stays small • arthrogyrosis • dislocated hips (may occur with any of the above) 	<p>59 87 167 279 109 126 122 155</p>
<p>walks with one (or both) hip, knee, or ankle that stays bent</p> 	<p>joints cannot be slowly straightened when child relaxes (see page 79).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contractures (shortened muscles) • joined or fused joints <p>may be secondary to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • joint infection • other causes 	<p>77 80 59 131 231</p>
<p>Joints can gradually be straightened when child relaxes.</p>	<p>spasticity, often cerebral palsy</p>		<p>89</p>
<p>Knees wide apart when feet together (bow legs). Waddles or dips from side to side (if he walks).</p> 	<p>under 18 months old</p> <p>Any combination of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joints look big or thick. • Child is short for age. • Bones weak, bent, or break easily. • Arms and legs may seem too short for body, or 'out of proportion'. • Belly and butt stick out a lot. 	<p>often normal</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rickets (lack of vitamin D and sunlight) • brittle bone disease • children who stay very short (dwarfism) • hypothyroidism • Down syndrome • dislocated hips 	<p>113 125 125 126 282 279 155 113</p>
<p>flat feet</p> 	<p>no pain or other problems</p>	<p>normal in many children</p>	<p>113</p>
<p>flat feet</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain may occur in arch of foot. • Deformity may get worse. 	<p>may be problems in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cerebral palsy • polio • spina bifida • Down syndrome 	<p>87 59 167 279</p>

BACK CURVES AND DEFORMITIES





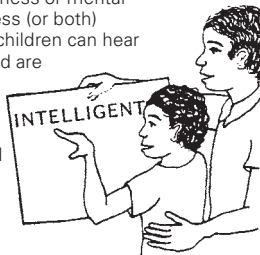
<p>sideways curve of backbone</p> 	<p>When child bends over, look for a lump on one side.</p> 	<p>'scoliosis'—may occur alone or as complication of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • cerebral palsy • muscular dystrophy • spina bifida • other physical disability 	<p>59 87 109 167 162</p>
---	--	--	--

IF THE CHILD HAS THIS	AND ALSO THIS	HE MAY HAVE	SEE PAGE
sway back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • belly often sticks out • may be due to contractures here, or weak stomach muscles 	'lordosis'—may occur in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • spina bifida • cerebral palsy • muscular dystrophy • Down syndrome • hypothyroidism • child who stays small • many other disabilities 	59 167 87 109 279 282 126 161
rounded back 		'kyphosis'—often occurs with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arthritis • spinal cord injury • severe polio • brittle bone disease 	136 175 59 125
hard, sharp bend of or bump in backbone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starts slowly and without pain • often family history of tuberculosis • may lead to paralysis of lower body 	tuberculosis of the spine	165
dark soft lump over backbone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present at birth • sometimes only a soft or slightly swollen area over spine • weakness and loss of feeling in feet or lower body 	spina bifida ('sack on the back')	167

OTHER DEFORMITIES

missing body parts	born that way 	born with missing or incomplete parts	121
	accidental or surgical loss of limbs (amputation) 	amputations	227
	gradual loss of fingers, toes, hands, or feet, often in persons who lack feeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • osteomyelitis (bone infections) sometimes seen with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leprosy (hands or feet) • spina bifida (feet only) 	159 215 167
hand problems (For hand problems from birth, see p. 305.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • floppy paralysis (no spasticity)  • without care may lead to contractures so that fingers cannot be opened 	may occur with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • muscular dystrophy • muscular atrophy • spinal cord injury (at neck level) • leprosy • damage to nerves or cords of arms All may lead to contractures.	59 109 112 175 215 127
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncontrolled muscle tightness (spasticity) • strange movements or hand in tight fist  	spastic cerebral palsy may lead to contractures	89
	burn scars and deformities 	burns	231
clubbing or bending of feet (For club feet from birth, see p. 114.)	may begin as floppy weakness and become stiff from contractures, if not prevented 	may occur with many physical disabilities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • cerebral palsy • spina bifida • muscular dystrophy • arthritis • spinal cord injury 	89 87 167 109 139 175

DISABILITIES THAT OFTEN OCCUR WITH OR ARE SECONDARY TO OTHER DISABILITIES

<p>Developmental delay:</p> <p>child slow to learn to use her body or develop basic skills</p> 	<p>caused by slow or incomplete brain function or by severe physical disability, or both</p>	<p>often seen in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental slowness • cerebral palsy • severely or multiply disabled children 	<p>277 87 283</p>
 <p>Joints will not straighten.</p>	<p>caused by overprotection: treating children like babies when they could do more for themselves</p>	<p>some delay can occur with almost any disability</p>	<p>287</p>
<p>Contractures</p> <p>joints that no longer straighten because muscles have shortened</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • usually due to muscle weakness or spasticity • Often, muscles that pull a joint one way are much weaker than those that pull it the other way (muscle imbalance). <p>sometimes due to scarring from burns or injuries</p>	<p>often secondary to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • polio • cerebral palsy • spina bifida • arthritis • muscular dystrophy • Erb's palsy • amputations • leprosy <p>burns</p>	<p>59 87 167 135 109 127 227 215</p> <p>231</p>
<p>Behavior problems</p> 	<p>may come from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brain damage • difficulty understanding things • overprotection • difficult home situation <p>(Some children with epilepsy from brain damage may pull out hair, bite themselves, etc.)</p>	<p>behavior problems common with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental slowness • seizures (epilepsy) • cerebral palsy <p>and for emotional reasons, with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spinal cord injury • muscular dystrophy • deafness • learning disability 	<p>277 233 87</p> <p>175 109 257 365</p>
<p>Slow to learn certain things only; otherwise intelligent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often over-active or nervous • sometimes behavior problems 	<p>learning disability</p>	<p>365</p>
<p>Speech and communication problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • often, but not always, due to deafness or mental slowness (or both) • Some children can hear well and are <p>but still cannot speak.</p> 	<p>may occur with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deafness • developmental delay • cerebral palsy • Down syndrome • hypothyroidism • children who stay small • brittle bone disease • cleft lip and palate <p>(Deafness may occur together with these and other disabilities.)</p>	<p>257 287 87 279 282 126 125 120</p>
<p>other problems that sometimes occur secondary to other disabilities</p> <p>(Some of these we have already included in this chart.)</p>	<p>Main disability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cerebral palsy <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • many disabilities with paralysis <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persons who have lost feeling: leprosy, spinal cord injury, spina bifida 	<p>Common secondary disabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blindness • deafness • seizures <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spinal curve <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pressure sores • osteomyelitis (bone infection) • loss of urine and bowel control 	<p>243 257 233</p> <p>161</p> <p>195 159 203</p>