

Thousands of children diagnosed with cerebral palsy every year in the US

Nearly 10,000 infants per year are diagnosed with cerebral palsy, a condition with an average financial impact of \$921,000 over a lifetime.

Cerebral palsy is a condition that affects approximately 764,000 children and adults across the nation. Nearly 65 percent of these individuals are children under the age of 18. Every single year, doctors in the United States diagnose anywhere from 8,000 to 10,000 infants with this condition, according to data collected by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and published by the organization MyChild.

The term cerebral palsy actually encompasses a series of impairments that impact an individual's life. These impairments affect the ability to speak clearly, complete tasks that require fine motor skills, sit up straight or even balance properly. Defining moments during childhood, like learning how to read or even ride a bicycle, are forever changed with this type of diagnosis.

Cerebral palsy can develop prior to, during and even after a child is born. Genetic and environmental factors can lead to the abnormal development of a child's brain during pregnancy. Although brain malformation could occur naturally, this is not the only cause of cerebral palsy. Unfortunately, cerebral palsy can also be caused by a birth injury that is suffered due to [hospital medical malpractice](#) during any stage of labor.

What is the financial impact of a cerebral palsy diagnosis?

Cerebral palsy is not an illness that will go away with the proper medication or an impairment that can be fixed with a simple medical device; it is a life-long diagnosis. Although being a parent has its indescribable rewards, even raising a healthy child is not an inexpensive endeavor.

The CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report published on January 30, 2004 estimated that the average lifetime costs associated with raising a child with [cerebral palsy](#) were \$921,000 higher than those associated with raising a healthy child. These costs were based on the average case, and estimates are often higher for those with severe impairments.

When the estimated cost is broken down by the type of expense incurred, approximately \$93,942 is spent on direct medical costs, which include typical physician visits, prescription medications or rehabilitative services. This number does not include visits to the emergency room or out-of-pocket expenditures.

Another \$84,732 is spent on direct non-medical costs that might include specialized education or modifications made to the family vehicle that are required to safely transport a child with cerebral palsy.

The largest portion of the cost, \$742,326 or 80.6 percent, is related to indirect expenses. These indirect expenses are measured from the perspective of the individual diagnosed with the condition, including the financial impact due to the individual's limited ability to work or a complete inability to work.

This final category does not include the economic impact on the family as a whole. Parents may give up career opportunities of their own to give the child the daily attention that they need, or a family may move to be closer to a school dedicated to special needs children.

It is also important to note in this discussion that the estimates published in the MMWR were determined based on the value of a dollar in 2003. Over a decade has passed since that time, and considering factors such as inflation means that the impact may be even greater for a child born with cerebral palsy today.

Relief is available after a birth injury

Understanding the true financial impact of a cerebral palsy diagnosis can be frightening, but there are legal relief options available for families after a birth injury. A Phoenix hospital medical malpractice attorney can help families obtain the compensation that they need and deserve to cover these costs so that they can focus their efforts on caring for their child.

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