



Why Adults with Cerebral Palsy Need a PCP

You're an adult with cerebral palsy...Why do you need a Primary Care Provider (PCP)?

Who are PCPs and what do they do?

PCPs are physicians or nurse practitioners that specialize in Internal Medicine or Family Medicine. PCPs are clinicians who are especially trained to promote health and prevent disease in adults. For patients with chronic illness, the PCP can act as a "medical home"- a centralized place to coordinate care between you and all of your specialists. You need someone who knows you when you're well, not just when you are sick. Some adults also may benefit from **Physiatrists** (Rehabilitation Medicine Physician) nerve, muscle and bone experts who help you to move and preserve function.

Wellness for Adults with CP:

Like all other adults, there are things YOU can do to be as healthy as possible, and your PCP can help:

- Immunizations (Shots): They're not just for kids! It is EXTREMELY important to get all recommended shots for your age, especially the flu shot each year (Deaths from the flu are more common in people with neurologic problems like CP).
- Eat a healthy diet and maintain a healthy weight. People with CP who are overweight are at risk for losing function, while underweight people are more likely to get ill.
- Be physically active. This is especially important for adults with CP- see the fact sheet ([hyperlink](#)).
- Smoking is bad for everybody! If you smoke, your PCP can help you quit.
- Get checked for high blood pressure and diabetes (sugar): High blood pressure and diabetes increase your risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. Your PCP can recommend a diet and exercise program, and medication if necessary, to control blood pressure.
- Get checked for low bone density: People with CP are particularly at risk for low bone density and broken bones. Your PCP can order a screening test and prescribe diet, exercise, and medications to improve bone strength if necessary.



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Wellness for adults with CP (continued)

- How is your mood? Depression and anxiety are common in adulthood. Your PCP can help you find effective treatment.
- Are you at risk for cancer? Your PCP can suggest the best ways to find cancers early.

Special Considerations for Adults with CP

- CP does not “get worse”, so loss of function by an adult with CP may be a sign of a new illness, which your PCP can help diagnose.
- Individuals with CP can work, attend college, have successful careers and families and a high “quality of life.”

- Many people with CP have spastic muscles which do not affect the sexual organs directly. Both men and women can look forward to a full and active sexual life. Sex can be enjoyed if the person is willing to learn to have sexual pleasure in different ways with different techniques and positions. It takes practice to find ways to enjoy sex (spasms can even enhance the experience). If you are thinking about having sex, discuss contraception and sexually transmitted disease prevention with your PCP first.

This fact sheet was created by the Lifespan Committee of the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine. More resources can be found at www.aacpdm.org