

CEREBRAL PALSY – ATAXIA

Overview

Ataxia impacts the way a person moves and can affect any part of the body including the arms, legs, speech and eye movement.

Effects on the body

When the **legs** are affected, a person experiences general instability and is therefore more likely to fall. As a result, a person with ataxia can sometimes seem as if they are affected by drugs or alcohol. To make up for this instability in the legs, the feet tend to be spread apart more and wider steps taken to minimise the chance of falling.

If the **arms and hands** are affected, then they can appear shaky. This form of ataxia impacts a person's ability to make precise finger movements, making it difficult to write or use utensils. They tend to over-correct their movements.

Speech and swallowing can be impacted by ataxia for some people with cerebral palsy. The condition is referred to as 'scanning speech' and they speak in a monotone. They can also pause in the middle of words and have a breathy sound.

Eyes affected by ataxia will over- or under-estimate what they are looking at, which means they can skip over the object and then have to look back. Similarly to when ataxia afflicts arms and hands, the eyes will over-correct their movement.

