



## The impact of feeding problems on growth and energy intake in children with cerebral palsy.

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Abstract:

Retrospective data on growth and cross-sectional data on growth outcome, anthropometric measurements and energy intake have been analysed according to the presence or absence of feeding problems in 42 children with cerebral palsy (CP) between 1 and 13 years of age. The mean age for boys and girls was 5.1 and 5.9 years, respectively. The study revealed a high frequency of feeding problems (50%) and growth retardation (48%) in the group. The results of weight for height, triceps skinfold thickness and energy intake indicate that 15% of the children were undernourished at the time of study. The cross-sectional analyses showed that children with feeding problems at the time of study (n = 22) had significantly lower height for age, weight for height, triceps skinfold thickness and upper-arm circumference than children without problems (P less than 0.05). Children with feeding problems also tended to have lower energy intake, but the differences were not significant. The feeding problems were most frequent among the severely disabled children. This study has shown that the presence of feeding problems is one important predictor of low growth outcome in children with CP. When parents report on feeding problems, feeding evaluation, training and nutritional intervention should be offered immediately. This is important for alleviating the heavy care-load for parents and health-workers and for some children it may be necessary to maintain an acceptable nutritional state.

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