

# Cerebral palsy patients' lung disease death risk 14 times higher

7 February 2019, by Hayley Jarvis

Adults with cerebral palsy in England are 14 times more likely to die from respiratory conditions, reveals a new study backed by Brunel University London.

The same group are also at three times higher risk of heart disease death than the general population, said the research.

It is the first time scientists can put a figure on the relative risk of death from different causes among people with [cerebral palsy](#) in England.

One in every 400 children in England has cerebral palsy, which affects muscle control and movement. It's mostly caused by brain injury before, during or after birth.

Survival rates for children with cerebral palsy have improved dramatically in recent decades and now most children with it live well into adulthood. But [death rates](#) among [adults](#) with cerebral palsy who aren't severely impaired haven't dropped, which leaves a growing life expectancy gap between adults with cerebral palsy and the general population. That gap has grown by 1.7 per cent a year since the 80s.

The study, published in *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, found adults with cerebral palsy have a four times greater risk of dying from any cause compared with the general population. And they are at greater risk from dying of [respiratory conditions](#) and cardiovascular diseases such as stroke and [heart disease](#), it suggests.

Along with cancer, heart and lung disease are the biggest killers worldwide, and a leading risk factor for both is lack of physical activity – something many with cerebral palsy struggle with. When they become adults, people with cerebral palsy often find a lack of services geared to them. This may make it harder for them to manage these conditions.

"People with cerebral palsy need ongoing support to prevent their condition deteriorating and developing secondary health conditions," said Dr. Jennifer Ryan. "However, we know adults with cerebral palsy often find it challenging to access the support and services they require as adults. We need more research to understand how we can better support adults with cerebral palsy to live a full and active life despite their changing needs".

Researchers from Brunel University London, University of Surrey, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and Luxembourg's Lunex University are working together to do more research into health and wellbeing in adults with cerebral palsy. The group, named RADiCAL (Rehabilitation for ADults with CerebAL palsy), aims to influence health services for adults with cerebral palsy.

**More information:** Mortality due to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and cancer in adults with cerebral palsy will be available on *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology* on Thursday Feb 7.

Provided by Brunel University

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