

UPPER LIMB ABNORMALITIES

Upper limb abnormalities may be congenital or traumatic. Causes for congenital limb abnormalities may be environmental, genetic or mixed but a few conditions occur with identified inherited patterns or chromosomal abnormalities.

- **Congenital abnormalities** account for the majority of cases and deficiencies can be partial or total, affecting the whole limb, elbow or hand.
- **Traumatic abnormalities** include birth injuries such as brachial plexus palsies, in which the baby has a shoulder dystocia causing a traction injury to the nerves to the arm (Erb's Palsy), sometimes requiring surgery.

Elbow abnormalities include Radial head dislocation causing mild loss of forearm rotation and a cosmetic bulge over the outer elbow. Radioulnar synostosis is usually a pain-free condition, but can result in a stiff forearm.

Hand abnormalities occur in about 1/1,000 births, the commonest are: *Syndactyly* - severity ranges from mild skin webbing to complete bony fusion of digits. *Polydactyly* - causes extra digits and may be inherited. *Camptodactyly* - bent finger in flexion-extension plane, usually affects the little finger at the proximal joint. *Clinodactyly* - bent finger in radio-ulnar plane, is common, and surgery is undertaken if there is an underlying bony abnormality with progressive deformity. *Radial aplasia* - radial club hand, has many possible causes, often involving body systems, e.g. heart, kidneys.

Whole limb abnormalities include congenital amputations or short limbs, e.g. phocomelia associated with drug ingestion (thalidomide).

*Children's needs are **individual** - some children may require additional support:*

- Counselling after traumatic injury
- Fine motor skills, using strategies to reduce the impact of limb loss, e.g. stabilising paper with blutak
- Self-esteem affecting wellbeing requiring pastoral support
- Self-help skills for dressing, feeding, toileting
- Written recording, possibly requiring modified equipment / resources. ICT, e.g. speech to text software, could provide a helpful alternative to written recording

FURTHER INFORMATION: REACH www.reach.org.uk