

Supporting CDKL5



Gastrointestinal Disorders in Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities. Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews 2008.

As the title suggests, this article reviews the various gastrointestinal problems that children with neurodevelopmental disabilities can suffer. It systematically describes problems from the mouth and swallowing, through to the lower bowel and constipation. Underlying causes are discussed and the various treatment options reviewed. The author points out how difficulties with eating may be confused with behavioural food avoidance or aversion, and that abdominal discomfort can present as chronic irritability, crying or dystonic (involuntary twisting or repetitive) movements of the face and neck. More than 80% of children with gastro-oesophagal reflux will have recurrent vomiting. Constipation is discussed and defined as opening of bowels less frequently than 3 times per week or the regular need for laxatives. Constipation is a common problem in children with disabilities and can go unrecognised for years. Treatment requires a consistent approach by willing parents and carers.

Note - Although this review tends to refer frequently to children with cerebral palsy, many of the problems discussed will apply to children with CDKL5. I have highlighted 2 particular issues that are discussed, gastro-oesophageal reflux and constipation, as these will be familiar to most of us. There is one particular telling line in the discussion about gastro-oesophagal reflux, which says "It is ironic that the learning deficit that usually accompanies neurological impairment also impairs the ability of the individual to communicate the main symptom... which is pain." A good and very useful review article - I have a full copy if anyone would like to read it