



The long-term outcomes of babies born with [hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy \(HIE\)](#) can vary widely, from no lasting effects to extensive physical and intellectual impairment requiring 24/hour care. How severely HIE affects an individual depends on a variety of factors, including:

- Severity of oxygen deprivation: If a baby's oxygen supply is dramatically or entirely cut off, their lasting brain damage may be greater.
- Duration of oxygen deprivation: Babies deprived of oxygen for longer are more likely to have permanent health complications.
- The baby's condition prior to the oxygen-depriving incident: For example, [premature babies](#) have more fragile brains and are more vulnerable to damage resulting from oxygen deprivation.
- Treatment immediately after the oxygen-depriving incident: A cutting-edge treatment called [therapeutic hypothermia](#) can minimize or prevent lasting brain damage if administered very shortly after the baby is deprived of oxygen (this treatment is so important that failure to provide it in a timely manner is a form of [medical malpractice](#)).
- Care throughout the child's development: There are a variety of [treatments and therapies](#) that can benefit children with HIE and associated conditions.

To determine the prognosis of an infant with HIE after birth, doctors may use Sarnat staging.



Sarnat staging considers clinical presentation, exam results, illness duration, and whether the baby has [seizures](#). Sarnat Stage I is considered “mild,” HIE, Stage II “moderate,” and Stage III “severe” (1). Although Sarnat staging is a useful diagnostic tool, its predictive value is somewhat limited, and it should be used in conjunction with other neonatal assessments (2, 3).

Children with HIE may have physical and/or intellectual disabilities, depending on which areas of the brain are affected. The ways in which it will affect an individual baby may not be completely clear until they grow older and begin to miss [developmental milestones](#). At that point, some children with HIE are diagnosed with related conditions, such as the following:

- [Cerebral palsy](#)
- [I/DD \(Intellectual/developmental disabilities\)](#)
- [Learning disabilities](#)
- [Epilepsy/seizure disorders](#)
- [Speech delays and language disorders](#)
- [Behavioral and emotional disorders](#)
- [Hearing and vision limitations](#)
- [Nutritional concerns](#)
- [Oral health issues](#)
- [Neurologic and mental health concerns](#)
- [Skin health concerns](#)
- [Orthopedic conditions](#)
- [Pain](#)
- [Respiratory conditions](#)
- [Sensory processing issues](#)

Although many of these conditions are not curable, symptoms and quality of life may be improved with a variety of [treatments/therapies](#), [assistive and adaptive technologies](#), [service animals](#), and other supports.



About the HIE Help Center and ABC Law Centers

The HIE Help Center is run by [ABC Law Centers](#), a medical malpractice firm exclusively handling cases involving HIE and other [birth injuries](#). Our lawyers have over 100 years of combined experience with this type of law, and have been advocating for children with HIE and related disabilities since the firm's inception in 1997.

We are passionate about helping families obtain the compensation necessary to cover their extensive medical bills, loss of wages (if one or both parents have to miss work in order to care for their child), assistive technology, and other necessities.

If you suspect your child's HIE may have been caused by medical negligence, please contact us today to learn more about pursuing a case. We provide free legal consultations, during which we will inform you of your [legal options](#) and answer any questions you may have. Moreover, you would pay nothing throughout the entire legal process unless we obtain a favorable settlement (no fee unless we win!)

You are also welcome to reach out to us with inquiries that are not related to malpractice. We cannot provide individualized medical advice, but we're happy to track down informational resources for you.

Sources

Sarnat, H. B., & Sarnat, M. S. (1976). Neonatal encephalopathy following fetal distress: a clinical and electroencephalographic study. *Archives of neurology*, 33(10), 696-705.

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<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/clinical-features-diagnosis-and-treatment-of-neonatal-en-cephalopathy>

Related resources

- [Disability Cost Guide](#)