



Treatments for hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy (HIE) and associated conditions

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At present, there is no true cure for [hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy \(HIE\)](#). However there is one treatment, called therapeutic hypothermia, that can reduce the extent of permanent brain damage if given very shortly after birth or the oxygen-depriving incident. Most guidelines dictate that therapeutic hypothermia be given within six hours, although there [may be some benefit up to 24 hours](#).

If the window of time to provide therapeutic hypothermia is missed, or if a child gets this treatment but still has lasting brain damage from HIE, there are a variety of additional treatments and therapies that can improve function and minimize symptoms. Here, we will first provide some information on therapeutic hypothermia, and then discuss other treatments and therapies that may benefit children or adults with HIE.

Therapeutic hypothermia

Therapeutic hypothermia may also be referred to as hypothermia therapy, brain cooling, head cooling, whole-body cooling, or cooling therapy. When a child is diagnosed with HIE, care standards mandate that therapeutic hypothermia be performed within six hours of the oxygen deprivation, provided that they meet certain criteria for gestational age, weight, etc. (1). This can be accomplished through a selective cooling cap or whole body cooling, and lasts for three days, after which the baby is slowly re-warmed to a normal temperature. To learn more about therapeutic hypothermia, please visit our [main page](#) on this topic.



Please note that if medical professionals fail to provide therapeutic hypothermia to a baby that needs it, this is a form of [medical malpractice](#). If this happened to your baby please contact us; the HIE Help Center is run by a malpractice law firm and we may be able to help.

Other treatments and therapies for HIE



It is very important that children with HIE receive intensive early intervention in order to minimize health issues and maximize function. Exact treatment regimens will vary based on what parts of the brain were affected (and to what extent) by the oxygen deprivation. For example, a child with intellectual disabilities will require different types of intervention than one whose impairments are mainly or exclusively physical. Children with HIE may develop a variety of [associated conditions](#), such as [cerebral palsy \(CP\)](#) and [epilepsy](#), which will also require treatment. Here, we list some treatments and therapies commonly recommended for children with HIE and associated conditions.

Please note that treatments should *always* be guided by the advice of a medical professional; this list is designed only to help raise awareness of the different possibilities available to children with HIE.

[Physical therapy](#): Physical therapy (PT) can help children develop motor skills. The goals of PT vary based on the type and severity of an individual's disability, but may include things like



learning to walk, improving strength, or increasing flexibility.

Occupational therapy: Occupational therapy is often confused with physical therapy but focuses more on helping children complete daily tasks and develop skills to maximize their independence. Occupational therapists work with clients on fine motor skills, visual perception skills, cognitive abilities, etc.

Speech/language pathology: Many children with HIE have **speech and language** disorders that impact their ability to form words, speak clearly, or process language. Speech/language pathology can help with these issues. It can also be useful for children with swallowing problems such as dysphagia.

Behavioral and emotional therapy: Some children with HIE may have behavioral and emotional issues. Therapy may help them manage anger and other negative emotions, communicate more effectively, improve social skills, etc.

Sensory integration therapy: Sensory Integration therapy (SIT) is meant to help children manage **sensory processing issues**. SIT is often classified as a **complementary and alternative medicine (CAM)** therapy, as, while it is *highly* popular, it is not yet as well-established as other forms of therapy.

Massage therapy: Massage therapy is one treatment commonly used to help alleviate pain, relieve stress, relax tight muscles, improve circulation and digestion, and rehabilitate bodily systems. It should be used alongside other therapies.

Recreational therapy: Children are more likely to enthusiastically participate in therapy if they are engaged and interested. Recreation therapy integrates fun activities (such as horseback riding, adaptive sports, or music) with therapeutic elements to help children both enjoy themselves and gain maximum physical, social, and emotional benefits.



Stem cell therapy: Stem cell therapy is still in clinical trials and not widely available in the United States. However, it holds promise as a treatment for HIE and a variety of other conditions. In this therapy, stem cells (which have the potential to divide into many different types of cells) are injected into injured tissues in the hopes of repairing damage.

Treatments for cerebral palsy: Because children with HIE often develop cerebral palsy, we have included some information on treatments specifically for CP. Click [here](#) to learn more about surgical interventions, and [here](#) to learn more about medications.

Please keep in mind that this is not a comprehensive list of treatments and therapies for children with HIE and associated conditions. In order to get a better understanding of what can be done to maximize your child's health and abilities, please consult with medical professionals.

Non-medical means of managing HIE

While medical care and therapies are extremely important for children with HIE, there are many additional considerations that can help maximize their potential. Among other things, these include [assistive and adaptive technologies](#), [service animal assistance](#), and [special education](#) programs.

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 have. Moreover, you would pay nothing throughout the entire legal process unless we obtain a favorable settlement.

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

The Academia Medical Center Patient Safety Organization (AMC PSO) Neonatal Encephalopathy Task Force. (2016). Therapeutic Hypothermia in Neonates: Recommendations of the Neonatal Encephalopathy Task Force[Pamphlet].