

# Ataxia and Cerebellar Disorders Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute

## Who We Are

Ataxia is a disease of the nervous system that affects coordination and balance, impacting a person's ability to talk without slurring speech, walk without stumbling or falling, coordinate hands and arms, and control eye movements. Ataxia often results from dysfunction in the brain structure called the cerebellum, which plays a key role in motor control. This dysfunction can have structural, infectious, postinfectious, autoimmune or genetic causes.

The Ataxia and Cerebellar Disorders Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute is one of the few clinics in the country that take an interdisciplinary approach to the evaluation and treatment of ataxia and cerebellar disorders in children. The collective expertise of the clinic's team of specialists ensures the best possible outcomes for children with ataxia and other cerebellar disorders. We provide medical evaluations and the most up-to-date treatment options to improve overall health and quality of life.

## Who We Serve

The clinic provides expert diagnosis and treatment for ataxia and cerebellar disorders for children under the age of 16. We treat children with congenital ataxia and structural differences in cerebellar development, as well as children who have newly developed or long-standing, acquired ataxia.

Symptoms vary, depending on the type and severity of ataxia. The age of onset will depend on the cause. If ataxia develops because of a genetic condition, it can be present from birth or emerge later in life. If it is due to an injury or another health condition, symptoms may emerge at any age.

The disorder can cause neurological symptoms such as:

- Gait ataxia (a wide-based, "drunken sailor" gait)
- Nystagmus (jerking or jiggling of the eyes)
- Dysarthria (slurred speech)
- Dysmetria (incoordination in reaching)
- Tremor
- Difficulty controlling distance, power and speed of arm, hand, leg or eye movements



## Our Team

The clinic is led by a neurologist who is an expert in these disorders and works with a team of clinicians, rehabilitation professionals and neurologists to provide optimal interdisciplinary care for patients. Because ataxia can affect many different systems in the body, treating a patient with these disorders often requires the collaboration of a wide range of medical specialists. Key specialists who see our patients include those in the following fields:

- Neurology
- Genetic counseling
- Physical therapy
- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy

Additionally, we can facilitate access to a comprehensive team of specialists, including specialists in neuropsychology and physical medicine and rehabilitation, to assist with specific medical needs, as required.

We are all born with great potential.  
Shouldn't we all have the chance to achieve it?

## Our Approach

Ataxic disorders are diagnosed using a combination of tools, including neurological evaluations, imaging studies and—for some types of hereditary ataxia—genetic blood tests. For children with newly diagnosed ataxia or cerebellar disorders, identifying treatable and reversible causes is critical to achieving improved outcomes.

Referring providers are welcome to contact us to expedite evaluation of appropriate patients.

There is not one specific treatment for ataxia and cerebellar disorders. Instead, treatment is applied to improve specific symptoms in each individual, and the goal is to improve the quality of life for our patients. Treatment often includes both pharmacological and nonpharmacological interventions. Early intervention with physical and occupational therapy, as well as neuropsychology for associated learning disorders, is also key to ensuring that children with ataxia or other cerebellar disorders reach their potential.

## Contact Information

### Ataxia and Cerebellar Disorders Clinic at Kennedy Krieger Institute

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call **443-923-9400**, or call toll-free at **888-554-2080**. TTY users, please contact us at **443-923-2645**, or dial **711** to make a Maryland Relay call.

### KennedyKrieger.org

### Physicians and Healthcare Professionals

To make a referral, call our Physician Referral Line at **443-923-9403**.

### Clinic Location

801 North Broadway  
Baltimore, MD 21205

### Mailing Address

707 North Broadway  
Baltimore, MD 21205

Kennedy Krieger Institute recognizes and respects the rights of patients and their families and treats them with courtesy and dignity. Kennedy Krieger Institute provides care that preserves cultural, psychosocial, spiritual and personal values, beliefs and preferences. Care is free from discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression, including transgender. We encourage patients and families to become active partners in their care by asking questions, seeking resources and advocating for the services and support they need. © 2020 Kennedy Krieger Institute 02/2020



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