Developmental Coordination Disorder - Dyspraxia

Information for older children

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) affects the development of motor skills and coordination. This may have a significant impact on your daily living, such as your self-care skills and school life.

In order to be given a diagnosis of DCD, any medical reasons for your difficulties must be ruled out by a doctor.

What is the difference between DCD and Dyspraxia?

Not all people with DCD have Dyspraxia. Dyspraxia is a type of DCD which means you have specific difficulties with motor planning, movement and coordination.

You will also find organisation of movement tricky and many young people have associated problems with their communication skills and organising their thoughts.

What might I find difficult?

- PE/sports – especially activities that involve throwing, catching and balancing
- Using scissors or cutlery
- Tying shoelaces
- Handwriting
- Navigating around school when lessons are in different places
- Sequencing tasks (getting things in the right order)
- Being organised (remembering homework)
- New tasks you haven’t tried before (takes you longer than your friends)
- Remembering things (pens, homework, bag)
- Easily distracted (by noises, fidgeting)
- Fidgeting in a chair, or with an object
- Sitting up straight, especially during handwriting tasks

Why do I find these things difficult?

Activities such as tying shoelaces and using a knife and fork may be difficult when you are using two hands together.

Sequencing tasks and being organised may be difficult as remembering information can be hard, which means that tasks involving more than one step can be tough.

Difficulty in handwriting could be due to: weak muscles; wobbly joints; the way you hold your pencil; your hands getting tired quickly or organising your ideas onto paper.

Slouching and fidgeting may be due to: a poor posture; low muscle tone in your back and reduced stability in your joints

You may be overly sensitive to sensations such as noises.
What does this mean to me?

- It may take you longer to learn new things
- You might need more time to finish tasks/work
- You need to go over things lots of times and check for mistakes
- You might need help to be organised with belongings and ideas

Will I improve?

Improvements can be made in some areas. They can be achieved with access to the right therapy to develop skills. Improvements to skills are different for everyone.

There are many ways to try to improve dyspraxia, such as:

- Postural exercises for your back and stomach;
- Strengthening exercises for your arms and legs;
- Strategies to make activities easier;
- Repetition, which is a really good way to improve something you are struggling with.

What will happen when I'm older?

You will need to:

- Continue to use strategies that work for you;
- Use diaries, planners or calendars to make remembering important things easier.

How can my school help?

- Use a visual timetable and calendar
- Use lists
- Help with homework planning
- Use a framework for essays (for example, mind mapping)
- Map of the school
- Pencil grips
- Extra time in exams or for tasks
- Timers – to visually see when an activity will end
- Reduce the need for note taking
- Use ICT equipment
- Fidget toy – to help concentration
- Break down tasks into smaller ones

How can my family help?

- Use a calendar
- Labels on bedroom drawers to help with organisation
- Checklists and to-do lists
- Have set routines for bedtimes, mealtimes etc.
- Special cutlery
- Support you in social activities such as rock climbing, canoeing, martial arts
Who else can help?

Occupational Therapist - can help with strategies for daily life

Physiotherapist - can help with muscle control and posture.

Community - Contact your local sports centres for activities you may like to take part in.

Online resources - www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

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Acknowledgement: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk and www.canchild.ca