



Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)

Pre-Diagnosis Information Booklet

What is DCD?

Developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) is a condition that affects the planning and execution of motor tasks. It causes a child to find daily activities more difficult.

Children can appear to move more slowly and/or clumsily than their peers. They are less accurate when carrying out activities that involve motor skills, such as catching a ball, handwriting or using scissors.

Dyspraxia is a term you may hear when a child struggles with certain coordination skills. Dyspraxia is not a term that there is an agreed definition for and there are no diagnostic criteria for it. Therefore, it should not be used in place of DCD diagnosis.

Possible signs

Pre-school

- Difficulty with construction toys, such as Duplo or jigsaws.
- Difficulty with fine motor skills during play.
- Struggles to sit on a chair at a table to do play activities.
- Struggles with ball skills, such as throwing and catching.

Primary school age

- Difficulties in P.E. and other physical activities.
- Messy handwriting and difficulties with laying out work.
- Have difficulty with friendships, as a lot of playground games use coordination skills, e.g. football or skipping.
- Difficulties with dressing, including buttons and shoelaces.

Secondary school age

- Refusing to go to school, or reluctant to go on certain days. This may be on days with P.E. or more handwriting.
- Difficulties with completing work on time.
- Poor or slow handwriting.
- Difficulties with working memory and other aspects of executive functioning.

Diagnostic criteria

Diagnostic criteria are statements that people have to meet in order to be given a diagnosis. For DCD the criteria are:

- A person must have significant coordination difficulties, despite having had the opportunity to practice.
- These difficulties must significantly impact on to day-to-day life, such as school work and self-care.
- These difficulties must have existed from an early age.
- Difficulties must not be better explained by another difficulty, such as a learning disability or visual impairment.

To diagnose or not to diagnose?

Deciding on whether to go through the diagnostic process can be a big decision.

Getting a diagnosis will not change your child or make them 'worse'.

A diagnosis can help a child, and those around them, understand their difficulties better and what they can do about them. It can also allow them to focus on their strengths. This can help later in life with things such as getting support for at university and picking the right career.

"I'm not going slowly, I've got DCD. I'll do it at my own pace"
(Girl, aged 18)

"Thanks, that makes a lot of sense. Can you explain it to my teacher?" (Boy, aged 7, after being given the diagnosis)

"It's helped to explain a lot of things. He's learned to do a lot of new things; we just break them down more. We try to focus on what's important and let the other stuff go" (Parent, child aged 10)

Diagnostic Process

NDAS – children with potential neurodevelopment difficulties, including DCD, should be referred to the Neurodevelopmental Assessment Service. Email: high-uhb.nds@nhs.net

EACD – the European Academy of Childhood Disability is a large group of specialised professionals working across Europe. They devised advice and guidelines about DCD that professionals in the Highlands follow.

Further information & resources

NHS

The National Health Service's website has further information on DCD

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/developmental-coordination-disorder-dyspraxia/>

Dyspraxia Foundation

Is a UK based charity that offers support, resources and an online shop.

<https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/>

8 West Alley, Hitchin, Herts, SE5 1EG

Telephone: 01462 454986

E-mail: dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

Can Child

Can Child is a non-profit research and educational centre based in Canada.

<https://canchild.ca/en/diagnoses/developmental-coordination-disorder>