



DEVELOPMENTAL CO-ORDINATION DISORDER DIAGNOSTIC PATHWAY

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) (also known as Dyspraxia) is a condition that affects physical/motor co-ordination. DCD occurs in childhood, but can cause continued problems into adulthood. Children with this condition tend not to perform at a level typical for their age in their activities of daily living and may appear more clumsy.

Diagnosis can be helpful in gaining a better understanding of children's needs, especially for schools but also for parents and other professionals involved. It can help them adjust expectations appropriately, differentiating learning activities so that the child is more likely to succeed. It helps to indicate the best adaptations to the environment and also tailor appropriate interventions to help improve skills and activities of daily living.

Early developmental skills such as crawling, feeding, dressing and walking can be delayed in children with DCD. Pencil skills and sports performance can also be affected. However, because development can vary widely anyway, a definite diagnosis of DCD would not usually occur until the child is 5 years old or older.

DCD can cause a wide range of problems, some of which may be evident at an early age while others may only become obvious as your child grows. Although DCD does not affect cognitive ability, DCD can make learning more difficult for a child, especially when having to produce written work, so they may need extra support and resources at school.



Possible Indicators of DCD -

- Delay in reaching typical developmental milestones
- Displaying unusual body positions/postures during their first year
- Difficulty playing with toys that require good co-ordination e.g. Lego
- Difficulty learning to use a knife and fork
- Problems with movement and coordination/ may appear clumsy/trips and falls often/ drop things
- Problems with dressing, buttons, zips and laces
- Difficulties with running, jumping, hopping, throwing and catching, or kicking a ball (may avoid or dislike PE)
- Difficulties walking up and down stairs
- Problems drawing, writing, and/or using scissors
- Difficulties keeping still

Diagnosis

Our DCD Assessment is undertaken predominantly by a Specialist OT and consultation from a Paediatrician, who work together to assess a child's level of difficulty and to discount any other underlying reasons for difficulties. For a diagnosis to be made, children with suspected DCD are usually assessed using the Movement ABC, a standardised assessment which involves tests of:

- **Gross motor skills** - i.e. the ability to use large muscles that co-ordinate significant body movements, such as moving, jumping and balancing.
- **Fine motor skills** – i.e. the ability to use small muscles for accurate co-ordinated movements, such as drawing and placing small pegs in holes.

For a diagnosis of DCD to be made, your child will usually need to meet all of the following **criteria**:

- Motor skills are significantly below the level expected for their age despite opportunities they have had to learn and use these skills
- Lack of motor skill significantly and persistently affects their daily activities and achievements at school
- Symptoms first developed during an early stage of development
- Lack of motor skills isn't better explained by long-term delay in all areas or by another medical condition.



Treatment & Support

DCD cannot be cured however some therapies, such as with a Specialist OT, can help children to manage their difficulties. This support would typically focus on:

- Breaking down difficult movements into smaller, more manageable parts and practising them regularly
- Adaptation of tasks to make them easier e.g. using a slope for writing and/ or a pencil grip.
- Aids and resources around self-organisation

Diagnosis, Recommendations and Report

All assessments will include the referrer (parents/carers) being provided with a written report compiled by both the Paediatrician and the Specialist OT.

The report and diagnosis, where relevant, can be provided to the young person's school and other health care professionals to enable better systemic support.

Costs

Both a Paediatrician and a Specialist OT will undertake assessment, liaison, consultation and write up time to ensure a holistic assessment is undertaken. Each DCD assessment costs **£1,590 in total**. This will include Parents/Carers being provided with a written report outlining findings and recommendations.

Referral

Parents/carers can refer a young person to our DCD clinic by contacting us either via email enquiry@psychologyassociates.org.uk or calling us on **0300 303 5233**.

All children and young people between the ages of 5-16 can be referred to our DCD clinic.

