

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) in Older Children

A Guide for Education and Health Care Professionals

What is DCD?

DCD is described as the person's motor performance being substantially below expected levels given the person's chronologic age and previous opportunities for skill acquisition which significantly and persistently interferes with activities of daily living or academic achievement. The motor skill deficits are not better explained by intellectual disability or visual impairment and are not attributable to a neurological condition affecting movement.

Characteristics of DCD in Older Children (Adolescents)

- Difficulties with organisation and time management in accomplishing daily activities (e.g. arranging & organising personal belongings, forgets or loses things, handling money, planning ahead and loses his way around in familiar environment)
- Difficulties in recalling some of the steps in doing domestic activities (e.g. meal preparation, making bed and other tasks)
- Decrease in academic performance (e.g. increased absences, missing lessons, unfinished homework, slow in recording classroom work and other related school activities)
- Reduced participation in PE and other leisure activities (e.g. sports, interests/hobbies & etc.)
- Increased isolation from peers (e.g. limited eye contact, lack of reciprocal communication/emotional responses, monotonous speech, change in peer group and increased risk for bullying).



Why do they have difficulties?

- Difficulties in attention and executive functioning (e.g. working memory, planning & inhibitory control)
- Delayed gross and fine motor co-ordination skills
- Reduced level of balance and postural control
- Reduced endurance, flexibility, strength and body fitness
- Reduced social communication and interaction skills.

Do young people with DCD outgrow their motor difficulties?

Although the condition tends to persist throughout adolescence into adulthood, they can and do learn to perform certain motor tasks, with practice. They would still have difficulties when faced with new and age-appropriate motor activities.

Parent and teachers can be significantly positive influences on the child's approach. With practice and effort, gradual improvement will be seen in specific skills.

The overall objective of most intervention is to develop specific skills, in order to promote successful participation in the typical activities.

