

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) in Younger 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 Younger Children

- Clumsiness or lack of co-ordination
- Difficulties in engaging to self-care activities
- Reduced participation in school, social & sporting activities
- Difficulties in learning new motor skills (e.g. riding a bike / scooter)
- Slow and illegible handwriting
- Difficulties in manipulating different tools
- Difficulties in using equipment in playground
- Difficulties in planning, being on time & organising things and work
- Experiences anxiety, frustration & lower self esteem



Do children 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.

Why do children have difficulties?

- Reduced level of balance and postural control
- Reduced level of strength
- Delayed gross and fine motor skills
- Concerns in executive functions (e.g. working memory)
- Concerns in playing and executing movements

