

DEVELOPMENTAL COORDINATION DISORDER (DCD)

Developmental Coordination Disorder



- Characterized by delays in motor skills or difficulties with motor coordination that affect activities of daily living.
- DCD is also known as Dyspraxia & is prevalent in 5-6% of children (1 in 20).
- Common in children with communication disorders as well as ADHD, ASD, and other learning disabilities.

Symptoms of DCD:



- Movements appear clumsy/awkward.
- Difficulty with motor planning.
- Child's movements seem slower, less accurate, and require more effort to perform.
- Difficulty performing age-appropriate ADLs.
- Difficulty completing schoolwork (handwriting, copying, etc.).
- Difficulty with skills such as hopping, jumping, and catching
- Struggle with Physical Education.
- Difficulty with organization and adapting to environmental changes.
- Frustration and refusal to participate in motor activities.

Diagnostic Criteria:

- Learning and execution of motor skills is below expected level for age, given opportunity for skill learning.
- Motor skill difficulties interfere with activities of daily living and impact academic/school productivity, prevocational and vocational activities, leisure and play.
- Onset is during the early developmental period.
- Motor skill difficulties are not better explained by intellectual delay, visual impairment, or other neurological conditions that affect movement.

Why is it important to diagnose and treat DCD?

- Children with DCD tend to have poorer mental and physical health than their counterparts – *it is important to understand and provide intervention for the disorder!*

If you suspect a child has motor problems that may qualify as DCD, you may consider:

- Sharing resources with parents.
- Making a referral to an occupational or physical therapist for a motor evaluation and intervention.
- Encouraging the family to see a physician to rule out other issues.

References: APA (2013); Blank et al. (2019); Caçola (2016); CanChild website (February 2022)

For additional information:

CanChild: <https://canchild.ca/en/diagnoses/developmental-coordination-disorder>
Understood: <https://www.understood.org/articles/en/understanding-developmental-coordination-disorder-dcd>

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