

Understanding DCD: Developmental Coordination Disorder

Information for patients, relatives, and carers

February 2025



Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects motor coordination in children and adults. While it is commonly identified in childhood, its impacts can continue into adulthood. DCD is also sometimes referred to as "dyspraxia."

Characteristics of DCD

Individuals with DCD often have difficulties with:

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Tasks that require precise hand movements, such as writing, using scissors, or tying shoelaces, may be challenging.
- **Gross Motor Skills:** Activities that involve larger body movements, like running, jumping, or catching a ball, can be difficult.
- **Coordination:** There is often a noticeable lack of coordination between different body parts, leading to awkward or clumsy movements.
- **Balance and Posture:** Maintaining balance and posture can be problematic, which might affect walking or standing still.

Causes and Diagnosis

The exact cause of DCD is not well understood, but it is believed to be due to differences in the way the brain develops and processes information. It is not caused by a specific medical condition or injury.

Diagnosis of DCD typically involves:

- **Clinical Assessment:** Observation of motor skills and coordination.
- **Developmental History:** Gathering information about the child's developmental milestones and any motor difficulties.
- **Exclusion of Other Conditions:** Ensuring that motor difficulties are not due to any other medical or neurological conditions.

Impact on Daily Life

DCD can affect various aspects of daily life, including:

- **Academic Performance:** Difficulty with writing and other classroom activities can impact learning.
- **Social Interactions:** Challenges in participating in sports or games may affect social relationships.
- **Self-Esteem:** Persistent difficulties may lead to frustration or low self-confidence.
- **Management and Support**

While there is no cure for DCD, several strategies can help manage the condition:

- **Occupational Therapy:** Helps improve fine motor skills and daily living activities.
- **Adapting Activities:** Modifying tasks to suit the individual's abilities, such as using larger-handled tools or alternate methods for learning.
- **Supportive Environment:** Encouraging a positive and understanding environment, both at home and school, can greatly benefit individuals with DCD.

Developmental Coordination Disorder is a lifelong condition that requires understanding and support. With the appropriate interventions and accommodations, individuals with DCD can lead fulfilling and successful lives.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have.

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

If you have any suggestions or comments about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the PALS team on **0191 445 6129** (09.00 – 17.00, Monday to Friday).

You can also email PALS at **ghnt.pals.service@nhs.net**

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Chief Executive,
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust,
Trust Headquarters,
Queen Elizabeth Hospital,
Sheriff Hill,
Gateshead,
NE9 6SX

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website ([Privacy - QE Gateshead](#)) or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net.

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