

Introduction

Developmental Coordination disorder (DCD), also known as dyspraxia, is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties with motor coordination and planning. People with DCD may have problems with tasks that require fine motor skills, such as writing or using scissors, and may also have difficulties with activities such as sports and physical education. DCD can also impact an individual's social skills, self-esteem and academic performance. The exact cause of DCD is unknown but it is thought to be related to problems with the development of the brain's motor control centers. There is no specific treatment for DCD but interventions such as occupational therapy and physical therapy can help individuals improve their motor skills and function. (Psychology Today, 2021).

Diagnosis

The diagnosis process for DCD typically involves a combination of assessments and evaluations, including both medical and educational assessments. The first step in the diagnosis process is a referral to a pediatrician or other medical professional, who will perform a general physical examination and rule out any medical conditions that may be causing or contributing to the child's motor difficulties. This may include tests such as blood tests, imaging studies, and neurologic evaluations. Next, a comprehensive assessment of the child's motor skills is conducted by an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist. This assessment may include standardized tests and observational measures of the child's fine and gross motor abilities, as well as assessments of their balance, coordination, and postural control (American Academy of Paediatrics, 2015).

In addition to the medical and therapeutic assessments, a thorough educational assessment is also an important step in the diagnosis process for DCD. This assessment may be conducted by a special education teacher or a psychologist, and may include measures of the child's cognitive abilities, academic achievement, and behavior. Finally, the information gathered from all the assessments are combined to make a diagnosis, this process should be done by a multidisciplinary team with expertise on the field, they will consider the criteria provided by DCD classification systems such as the Diagn and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) or the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). (Johns, L and Polatajko, H. 2015. And World health organisation. 2019). It's important to note that this process can be time-consuming and may require multiple evaluations, but it is important to establish an accurate diagnosis to provide the appropriate support and intervention (American psychiatric association. 2013).

Barriers

Children with DCD may have difficulty with fine and/or gross motor tasks, which can make it challenging to participate in activities that involve writing, cutting, drawing, or manipulating small objects. This can impact their ability to complete schoolwork and participate in classroom activities. Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) can face a number of barriers to learning, both in the classroom and in other settings. Some of these barriers include:

- Limited attention and concentration: Children with DCD may have difficulty maintaining attention and concentration, which can make it challenging to stay engaged in classroom activities and to follow through on tasks.
- Difficulty with organization and planning: Children with DCD may struggle with planning and organizing their work, which can make it challenging to complete tasks on time and to stay on task.
- Poor self-esteem and self-perception: Children with DCD may experience feelings of frustration, embarrassment, and low self-esteem due to their motor difficulties, which can negatively impact their overall well-being and their ability to learn.
- socio-emotional difficulties: Children with DCD may have difficulty with social interactions and communication, which can make it challenging to participate in group activities, to make friends and to understand and follow social cues.

It's important to note that DCD can have an impact on children's whole life, affecting not only their academic development but also their social and emotional well-being and their relationships. (Radomski, M. Et. Al. 2008).

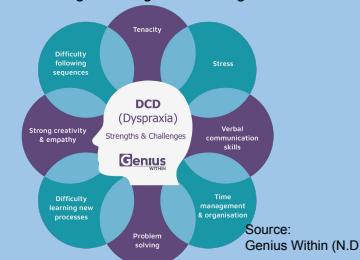
Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms of DCD can vary from person to person, but they typically involve difficulty with fine and/or gross motor skills. It's important to note that these symptoms may be seen in other conditions as well and it should be diagnosed by a professional like a pediatrician, a neuropsychiatrist or occupational therapist, and that not all children who experience these symptoms will be diagnosed with DCD (Polatajko, H.J. and Missuna, C. 2013).

Symptoms of DCD in infants and young children may include:

- Delays in reaching developmental milestones such as sitting, crawling, and walking
- Difficulty with grasping and manipulating objects
- Clumsiness or poor balance
- Difficulty with coordinating movements
- Poor postural control
- Difficulty with activities that require precise motor control, such as buttoning clothes or using utensils
- Clumsy and awkward movements
- Struggling to perform tasks that require coordination, such as catching a ball or riding a bike (Missiuna C. et al. 2010)

It is important to note that all children develop at their own pace, and it is normal for children to have some difficulty with fine motor skills at certain stages of development. However, if a child consistently struggles with coordination and fine motor tasks, it may be a sign of DCD. (Piek, J. Et. Al. 2011).



Strategies to help children with DCD

One strategy that a school can put in place to help a child with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is to provide accommodations and support in the classroom. This may include allowing the child extra time to complete tasks, providing modified equipment such as pencil grips or adapted scissors, and offering visual or verbal prompts to assist with organization and task completion. In addition to these accommodations, it may also be helpful for the child to receive support from an occupational therapist or other specialized staff. Occupational therapy can help the child improve their motor skills and function, as well as develop strategies for managing their condition in the classroom and other daily activities. Another helpful strategy for supporting a child with DCD in the school setting is to provide a structured and predictable routine. This can help the child feel more comfortable and confident in their abilities, as well as reduce feelings of anxiety or frustration. It is also important for the school to work closely with the child's parents and any other healthcare providers to ensure that the child's needs are being met and to develop a comprehensive plan for their support. This may include regular communication and progress updates, as well as ongoing collaboration to adjust and modify the plan as needed. Overall, by providing accommodations, support from specialized staff, a structured routine, and close collaboration with the child's parents and healthcare providers, a school can effectively support a child with DCD and help them succeed in their academic and personal endeavors (NHS, 2022 and Psychology Today, 2021).

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