

"DYSPRAXIA ? CLUM-SEE CANED?"

Clumsy children, Developmental Dyspraxia, Co-ordination difficulties, perceptual motor difficulties? Perhaps we have heard of these terms before? While these terms seemingly appears a mouthful, there is much confusion over the usage of these terms. Instead, the term "Developmental Co-ordination Delay" or DCD has been widely used. Dyspraxia as a matter of fact falls under the umbrella of DCD².

What's Dyspraxia?

Praxis is the ability by which we figure out how to use our hands and body in skilled tasks e.g. playing with toys, building a structure². Hence dyspraxia is defined as difficulty in planning and executing an activity in the correct sequence.

dYs-praxia in children is a condition where there is a delay in their developmental milestones. Dyspraxic children will experience difficulty in doing simple daily activities such as dressing, going up and down stairs while delay in speech and language development is not uncommon. **Very often a child who has DCD may present with dyspraxia².** (don't understand this sentence)

Dyspraxia can affect any or all areas of development – intellectual, emotional, physical, language, social and sensory - and may impair a child's normal process of learning (see Table 1). Usually, it's said to be an impairment or immaturity in the organisation of movement. However, associated with this may also be problems in language, perception and thought.



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Poor handwriting is one of the most common symptoms of dyspraxia³. Children who have poor handwriting don't need their parent or teacher to tell them about it. Every time they write, they can see that they are not as good as their friends.

<u>Areas affected</u>	<u>Scenario(s)</u>
Gross Motor Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poor balancing skills e.g. riding a bicycle ▪ Poor posture ▪ Difficulty in bilateral limb involvement e.g. jumping ▪ Poor hand-eye co-ordination e.g. batting games, loses place during reading ▪ Clumsy gait ▪ Increased tendency to fall or bump into things/people
Fine Motor Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of manual dexterity ▪ Difficulty in bilateral upper limb activities e.g. craftwork, playing musical instruments ▪ Poor manipulative skills ▪ Difficulty with handwriting or drawing ▪ Poor pencil grip e.g. pressing too hard when writing, unable to write on a line
Poor hand dominance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using either hand for different tasks during different times
Speech & Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty to organize content and sequence of

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sentence ▪ Unclear speech ▪ Unable to pronounce certain words
Visual Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oversensitive to light ▪ Unable to distinguish sounds from background noise ▪ Over/ under-sensitive to touch ▪ Inability to distinguish left and right ▪ Poor planning skills ▪ Limited concentration
Intrapersonal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty in sitting in during groups ▪ Slow to adapt to new or unpredictable situations ▪ Tendency to opt out of things which are too difficult
Interpersonal Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prone to low self esteem, phobias, obsessions, compulsions and addictive behaviour

Table 1 Different Areas affected for persons with dyspraxia

What can Occupational Therapy do for a child with Dyspraxia?

An assessment of the child plus an interview with the parents will be conducted by the Occupational Therapist (OT) to find out the child's current level of functioning and their early development¹. The OT will observe the child in performing certain tasks to determine the quality of his/her movements and to identify areas which the child has difficulties. It is important in helping a child and his family to understand the struggles which he/she encounters.

Treatment may involve various approaches such as sensory integration, perceptual motor, sensorimotor and compensatory skill development¹. These different approaches focuses on how children manages everyday activities at home, school and play, and work on the assumption that children will develop skills as a result of the interaction between the children, the task and their environment.

Reference

1. Recognising the referring children with Developmental Coordination Disorder (2007) CanChild Centre for Childhood Disability Research. McMaster University
2. <http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk>
3. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/dyspraxia2.shtml>



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