



Dyspraxia/DCD and Physical Exercise /Activity for Children

Developmental coordination disorder (DCD), also known as Dyspraxia in the UK, is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination in children and adults. It can also affect speech. DCD is a lifelong condition, formally recognised by international organisations including the World Health Organisation. DCD is distinct from other motor disorders such as cerebral palsy and stroke, and occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. Individuals may vary in how their difficulties present: these may change over time depending on environmental demands and life experiences. *(movementmatters,uk,2013)*

Whilst dyspraxia/DCD is primarily a motor disorder, in many cases individuals may experience difficulties with memory, perception and processing along with poor planning, organisation and sequencing skills which can have a significant negative impact on everyday activities. Although, the condition may occur in isolation, it frequently coexists with other conditions such as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder), dyslexia, language disorders and social, emotional and behavioural impairments. *(Dyspraxia Foundation, 2015)*

Why children should exercise:

- Keeps a strong heart and ensures healthy growth and development
- Improves posture, balance and general coordination
- It builds and maintains strong healthy muscles, bones and joints
- Less likely to become overweight
- Reduces anxiety, depression and improves self esteem

How much physical activity should a child do?

The N.H.S. recommends that children under 5 should minimise the amount of time being sedentary (eg sitting down) and be active for at least 3 hours spread out throughout each day. Children between the ages of 5 – 18 should do 60 minutes of physical activity (a mixture of moderate and vigorous exercise) every day and on 3 days a week these activities should involve activities or developing strong muscles and bones.

Those who are in a position to support and encourage children with dyspraxia/DCD should be aware and mindful of the extra challenges they face. They can easily become totally disaffected if they are constantly unsuccessful. Indeed evidence suggests that many are put off physical activity due to poor experiences in their early years. Activities should be achievable and be 'a just right challenge'.

For more information please visit our website.

Please remember that all activity should be safe and achievable. If you have any concerns, consult a medical practitioner before embarking on any programme of exercise.

How to do this:

<p>For under 5s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimise the amount of sitting down such as watching TV, playing on iPads, sitting in a pushchair • walk or skip to shops/ park / friend's house • games such as hide and seek, stuck in the mud, tag and other chasing games • running around jumping in puddles • obstacle courses • races – bear walk, jumping, crawling, large steps, tiny steps, walk sideways • treasure hunts/paper trails • jumping on a trampoline (care if your child is hypermobile ie has bendy joints) • riding a tricycle or bicycle, scooter • dancing • swimming • going to soft play areas or adventure playgrounds • tumbletots • walk on uneven surfaces such as cushions, duvets and sand • playing ball games – practice throwing a ball/bean bag/rolled up socks as far as you can; skittles (both with throwing ball and kicking a ball);keeping a balloon up in the air; batting a balloon; catch bubbles in the air, throwing a beach ball • jumping off bottom stair/step
<p>For over 5's moderate exercise (working hard enough to raise their heart rate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • walk to and from school • play in the playground • walk the dog • cycling • ride a scooter/tricycle/bike • ten pin bowling • golf • horse riding • climbing
<p>Vigorous exercise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • play chase, tag, Stuck in the Mud • dancing to videos or music

(working hard enough to be breathing hard and fast, and their heart rate has gone up quite a bit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • swimming • martial arts • running up and down stairs • fast walking walking races • races - e.g. jumping (forwards, backwards and sideways), hopping, skipping, running, • Kwik cricket/rounders
For strong muscles and bones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • step ups • dance • skipping with a rope • martial arts • fast walking /jogging • badminton/short tennis • crab football • tug of war

Additional activities for the older child

11+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rowing ,canoeing • rock climbing/bouldering • hiking • Trampolining • Team sports football/tennis/ cheerleading
16+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aerobics • Using resistance exercises with exercise bands, weight machines or hand-held weights • rock climbing • aqua aerobics • gym work/gymnastics • pilates • yoga • dance

Sport activity

It is important that your child finds an activity/sport they enjoy so try different ones. If they do not enjoy team games, try other sports such as tennis, badminton, golf, swimming, archery, fishing, sailing, table tennis, canoeing. They do not need to participate in competitive sport but just playing is a great way to exercise.

References:

- CAIRNEY et al (2011) Obesity Risk in Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder: What do we know and what should we do? Dyspraxia Foundation Professional Journal (10) 21 – 32
- <http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/about-dyspraxia/dyspraxia-glance>
- LIFSHITZ et al (2015) Gender Differences, in Physical Fitness and Overweight Between Children with and Without DCD: DCD 11 Conference, Oral presentation
- <http://www.movementmattersuk.org/>
- <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/819.aspx?CategoryID=52&SubCategoryID=142>

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