



Dyspraxia

A booklet for parents/carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

What is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia can also be known as Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD). It is a condition which affects physical co-ordination that causes a child to perform less well than expected in daily activities for their age and appear to move clumsily.

Dyspraxia is a lifelong condition. It is thought to be more common in boys than girls, and the condition sometimes runs in families. Of those diagnosed, around 80% are male.



Dyspraxia is a brain-based condition that makes it hard to plan and co-ordinate physical movement. Children with this tend to struggle with balance and posture.

Dyspraxia is not due to muscle weakness and is not associated with low intelligence.

It can affect the development of gross motor skills like walking or jumping and can also affect fine motor skills needed in handwriting and mouth and tongue movements needed in pronouncing words clearly.

What causes Dyspraxia?

It is not yet known what causes dyspraxia. Although the exact causes of dyspraxia are unknown, it is thought to be caused by a disruption in the way messages from the brain are transmitted to the body. This affects a person's ability to perform movements in a smooth, coordinated way.



Some researchers have identified a number of risk factors that can increase the likelihood of developing dyspraxia which include being born prematurely, having a low birth weight, having a family history of dyspraxia or alcohol or drug abuse when pregnant.

How is Dyspraxia diagnosed?

It is important to remember that children vary widely in their rate of development and a diagnosis of dyspraxia may not be given until a child is around five years or more.

Observing your child and taking notes can help you show that your child's behaviour has been ongoing and can help professionals to understand your concerns.

Your child may be referred via your family doctor to other professionals such as an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, speech and language therapist or an educational psychologist, depending on your child's specific areas of difficulty.



For a diagnosis your child will have:

- Motor skills difficulties not explained by other conditions
- Motor skills and co-ordination are behind others of their age group
- Their difficulties are significantly and persistently impacting on daily life and school life
- Symptoms were present in early life



Signs and Symptoms of Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia affects some children more than others and there are common symptoms for different age groups.

Signs in a Toddler

- Messy eater, preferring to eat with fingers
- Unable to play with a ball
- Delayed at becoming toilet trained
- Avoids playing with construction toys or puzzles
- Doesn't talk as well as other children of the same age

Signs in school age

- Bumps into people and things
- Has difficulty with shoelaces, buttons and zips
- Difficulty riding a bike, skipping and jumping
- Drops objects or holds them awkwardly
- Trouble writing or drawing
- Avoids sports
- Difficulty following instructions and remembering them
- Struggles with games needing hand-eye coordination
- Speaks slowly and has difficulty in pronouncing words



Treatment for Dyspraxia

There are a number of therapies which can make it easier for children to manage their difficulties.

These can include:

- **Occupational therapy**—which helps your child develop everyday skills for home and school life such as using a knife and fork or writing legibly
- **Speech therapy**—can help to identify your child's speech issues and suggest specific exercises to help them communicate more clearly
- **Physiotherapy**—can provide exercises to help with balance, movement and strength
- **Educational psychologist**—can assess your child's way of learning and highlight their difficulties. They provide strategies that can be used in school and home to improve their learning

Ways to help at home



- Learn as much as you can and share information with family, friends and school
- Encourage physical activity in your child. Any kind of play whether it is swimming, hide and seek or walking the dog is good for balance and developing motor skills
- Play games such as jigsaws or Wii games which will help your child work on visual and spatial perception. They will also help with fine motor skills
- Throwing games such as using a bean bag to throw into a hoop or catch helps to develop hand-eye coordination
- Playing with putty or playdough is good for hand muscles and can be a good stress reliever
- Get some pencil grips or get interesting pens and pencils to encourage your child to write and help keep things interesting
- Practice typing on a keyboard which may be easier for your child than handwriting, but liaise with school as writing still needs to be practised
- Download some apps onto your computer or ipad which can improve fine motor skills and encourage hand and eye coordination
- Adjust your expectations as your child may need help with some simple everyday activities that other children their age may have mastered. By recognising your child's difficulties you can help them work on areas they need extra help with
- Build self esteem by rewarding your child's efforts. Find things your child is good at but acknowledge that dyspraxia can be very frustrating for all of the family so have some strategies in place to help you when stressful situations arise



Occupational Therapist

Advises parents and schools about aids and adaptations at home and school. Runs programmes to assist with fine and gross motor skills. Gives advice about mobility and co-ordination skills. Referrals to this service are made by schools or health care professionals.

Physiotherapist

Works to support the child and their family to reach their greatest physical potential. This includes giving support and advice to school. Referrals to this service can be made by health care professionals.

Special Educational Needs Teaching and Support Service (SENTASS)

This is a team of local authority specialist teachers and support staff who assess and work with children and young people who have a range of special educational needs.

They work with parents and professionals to provide a co-ordinated programme of intervention. They work with children from pre-school to school leaving age who have dyslexia, dyspraxia, specific learning disabilities, visual and hearing impairments and communication difficulties. They accept referrals from schools and health colleagues.

Speech and Language Therapist (SALT)

Helps development of social and language skills in children and gives advice on the use of alternative methods of communication including symbols and Makaton. Can assist with oral motor problems and offer advice on swallowing and chewing difficulties. They have an open referral system – anyone can refer as long as they have permission of the child's parents. Parents/carers can refer directly if they wish.

Tel: 0191 282 3085

Educational Psychologist

They work with children in schools and early years settings and at home visits for pre-school children. Works with teachers, parents and other professionals to assess, give advice on management and teaching of the child to make the best possible progress.

Referrals to this service are made by schools.

Useful Contacts

Dyspraxia Foundation

Supports anyone affected by dyspraxia. Provides resources and leaflets.
Helpline: 01462 454986 (Mon - Fri 10 am - 1pm)
Email: info@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk
Web: www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk



Movement Matters

Movement Matters is the UK umbrella organisation representing the major national groups concerned with children and adults with coordination difficulties.

Email: info@movementmatters.org.uk
Web: www.movementmattersuk.org



Parent Carer Participation & Families United

Families United is a support network for parents, carers and families of children with disabilities in Newcastle.

Web: www.newcastlefamiliesunited.com
Tel: 0191 277 4700
Email: Sharon.Hand@newcastle.gov.uk



Newcastle Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service

This service provides information specialising in education matters and includes information and signposting on social care and health issues.

Contact: Judith Lane
Tel: 0191 284 0480



Local Offer

The Local Offer describes the services available for children/young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) aged 0 - 25 and their families.

Email: localoffer@newcastle.gov.uk
Web: www.newcastle.gov.uk/localoffer



Contact

(New name for Contact a Family) **contact**
Helping families in the North East who care for disabled children.

Tel: 0191 213 6300
Email: northeast.office@contact.org.uk
Web: www.contact.org.uk

Look for advice in your area - select North East

Skills for People

This booklet is produced by the Skills for People, a charity run by disabled people. We are based in Newcastle upon Tyne and for over 25 years we have been helping disabled people to speak up for themselves and make their own choices about their lives. Our work is led by disabled people and their experiences are at the heart of all we do.

Our Family Advice Workers support families with disabled children/young people up to the age of 25. They help families by giving practical advice, appropriate to their needs and working across all agencies such as education, social care, health, benefits, leisure and voluntary services. Their services are free to parents/carers.

We produce a range of information booklets, factsheets and "How To" guides.
Visit our website to see the full range: www.nsn.org.uk/resources

How to get in touch

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Facebook: on.fb.me/1istYKg



Newcastle parents of children with disabilities
and special needs working together

Facebook: Pass it on Parents Newcastle

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