



# Developmental Coordination Disorder

Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is characterized by poor motor coordination that interferes with the child's daily activities and academic achievements.

It is estimated to occur in approximately 5-10% of children. This condition usually becomes apparent between 6 and 12 years of age. For unclear reasons, boys are more commonly affected than girls. To be diagnosed with DCD, there must NOT be another physical or neurologic disorder accountable for these symptoms. However, a substantial number of children (up to 50%) also have co-existing learning disabilities, behavioral problems or ADHD.

## Cause

The exact cause is unknown. However, the problems experienced by children with DCD are believed to be due to abnormalities in neurotransmitter or receptor systems in the brain.

## Signs & Symptoms

Children may exhibit a wide range of symptoms. Some children have difficulty performing routine daily activities that require motor coordination. For example, children often have significant delays in achieving motor milestones at a young age (e.g., walking, crawling, sitting). They may drop things or seem "clumsy," have abnormal posture or balance sense and/or have impaired performance in sports. Because of poor coordination, affected children may have low self-esteem, feel isolated from their peers and experience problems at school.

## Diagnosis

While most of the symptoms are usually first recognized by family members, coaches and teachers, DCD is a medical diagnosis. Your physician can make a thorough medical assessment and may refer you to other health professionals who can help diagnose this condition.

## Treatment

Current research suggests that without intervention, symptoms will not improve. Home exercises, as well as physical therapy, are the mainstays of treatment. The objective is to engage children in challenging activities that stimulate their sensory processing. Physical therapy may target muscle tightness, weakness and problems with posture. In most children, at least some improvement is evident after six months of treatment.