

What Is Dyspraxia?

Dyspraxia is also known as Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD). It has been described as 'difficulty getting our bodies to do what we want when we want them to do it' (Ripley, Daines and Barrett) and this can be considered significant when it interferes with the normal range of activities expected of a child.

For most cases, there is no known cause. According to the Dyspraxia Foundation, current research suggests that the disorder is a result of an immaturity of neurone development in the brain, rather than brain damage. People with dyspraxia have no clinical neurological abnormality to explain their condition.

Dyspraxia can adversely affect speech and language, fine motor control and gross motor coordination.

There are a number of risk factors that can increase a child's likelihood of developing dyspraxia, including: being born prematurely – generally before the 37th week of pregnancy; having a family history of dyspraxia; the mother drinking alcohol or taking non-prescription drugs while pregnant.

Children with dyspraxia may have delayed early developmental milestones, such as crawling, walking, self-feeding and dressing. During a normal school day, dyspraxia can manifest itself through:

- handwriting difficulties;
- difficulty using tools, utensils and cutlery;
- not being able to run in a straight line, or to effectively alter their path to avoid objects;
- poor hand/eye coordination;
- poor attention span;
- difficulty understanding concepts such as 'in', 'on' and 'in front of';
- poor organisation;
- difficulty with some social skills/cues.

