

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



ADDvanced Solutions
Supporting you to find the answers

Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is a common disorder that affects movement and co-ordination. It is also known as developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD). As with all specific learning disorders, it doesn't relate to the general intelligence of the individual.

Dyspraxia affects gross motor skills (such as walking or sitting upright) and fine motor skills (such as writing or picking up small objects) in children and adults. It is a condition that will last for life and is recognised by international organisations, including the World Health Organisation.

The symptoms of dyspraxia can vary between individuals and may change over time, and include co-ordination difficulties along with impaired organisational skills; those affected often also have social and emotional difficulties.

The co-ordination difficulties can impact on every area of life – from playing and joining in socially in school, to successfully navigating around a school classroom or place of work. Development of writing and other academic skills are impacted, and self-confidence in young people with dyspraxia is very often lower than in their peers. In adult life dyspraxia continues to cause problems, in areas such as driving and general household tasks.

Dyspraxia was only recognised as a condition in the last 20 years or so, which means there are probably a lot of undiagnosed adults with the condition. It is thought to affect 5-6% of people in the UK and is more common in men than in women. As with other neurodevelopmental conditions, it often runs in families.

Useful tips for dealing with dyspraxia

- Use press-studs and Velcro on clothing rather than fiddly buttons
- Make use of any adaptations that are available – such as pencil grips, self-tying shoelaces etc.
- Break tasks into smaller sections and practice these mini-tasks until you feel confident in them, before putting them together to accomplish the larger activity.
- Schools can use wider-lined paper, slant boards, and encourage typing for some classwork.
- Teachers should also adopt a very positive and reassuring attitude, using plenty of descriptive praise and encouragement.
- Use a calendar or diary to improve organisation, and synchronise this with your phone and computer if possible.
- Help the individual to talk positively about their challenges and how they have overcome them.
- Learn how to use a computer or laptop if writing by hand is difficult.

Remember, dyspraxia does not affect intelligence, but may make learning new skills more difficult.

You may find your movement problems improve as you find ways to adapt. As you grow older and accept yourself, your confidence and self-esteem may also improve. This may be because the pressure to 'fit in' as an adult is not as strong as when you were a child and teenager. Some people also find staying fit helps their co-ordination, reduces tiredness and helps with potential weight gain.

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