

# Dyspraxia

Dyspraxia is a condition that affects mainly movement – gross and fine motor skills but also any or all of the areas of age-appropriate developments such as language skills, social skills, sensory, emotional skills and perception.

Problems appear in forming ideas, motor planning and execution but each individual is affected differently and to different degrees. There is no known cause and it is estimated that up to 10% of children may have dyspraxia (with 2% being significantly affected) and boys are affected four times more frequently than girls.

It is also known as developmental coordination disorder (DCD), motor learning difficulty, 'clumsy child syndrome' and perceptuo-motor dysfunction. Where the condition co-exists with ADHD it is called DAMP or Deficits in Attention Motor Control and Perception.

Parents may notice the problem early on. Their child may have trouble with some of the following:

- balance and co-ordination
- developmental milestones, look at: [www.nhs.uk/Tools/Documents/Birth%20to%205%20development%20timeline.htm](http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Documents/Birth%20to%205%20development%20timeline.htm)
- self esteem
- clumsiness
- eye control
- limited play choices
- isolation from peers.

Fine-motor skills may be affected, such as:

- doing up buttons, tying shoe laces
- picking up small objects
- writing, colouring, painting.

Gross-motor skills too, for instance:

- sitting, crawling, walking
- hopping, jumping
- riding a bicycle
- PE, ball-games.

Dyspraxia can also cause problems with the following:

- specific learning difficulties, particularly: spelling, reversals, rote learning, sequencing
- jigsaws and sorting
- poor social skills
- behaviour
- attention and task maintenance
- personal organisation
- coping with change in routine.

There might also be some speech and language or pronunciation difficulties caused by problems coordinating the various movements of the mouth and tongue. Children with dyspraxia need considerable support from adults.

## DIAGNOSIS

If the child is at pre-school level then speak to a GP or Health Visitor and nursery staff, for a school age child speak to the teacher or the school special needs coordinator, the school nurse, school doctor or GP. These people can make referrals to appropriate services within the area for assessment, for example to a Paediatrician, hospital or community based therapy team, educational psychologists. Child development teams make assessments to determine the child's needs and provide appropriate advice and/or therapy. Another option is an assessment by a private Occupational Therapist.

## HELP AT HOME

### Getting dressed

- Velcro on shoes not laces or buckles
- lay out clothes in dressing order
- loose clothing
- avoid tie
- larger holes and buttons
- elasticated trousers and skirts
- clothes with a distinctive front and back, for example, a V-neck sweater, pleated trousers.

### Eating

- use flexible straws
- don't fill cups too full
- non-slide mat for plate
- curved knives and forks.

### Getting Organised

- Keep to a daily routine
- use timetables
- use post-its as reminders
- everything in a specific place
- cupboards and drawers labelled.

### Motor skills

- Put aside time to help practice handwriting
- buy fun toys that help improve holding, placing, spatial awareness etc.
- play throwing and catching games
- encourage balancing on logs, walking on flower pots
- help to learn to ride a bike/trike.

**Very important** – Give lots of praise and encouragement!

## HELP AT SCHOOL

- Reduce distractions in the classroom; keep desk clutter to a minimum
- Make a personal timetable and encourage use of a diary for upcoming events, homework dates, any extra equipment needed
- Give responsibilities/tasks which should involve others; encourage teamwork and make sure other children offer support especially in PE
- Encourage interaction with other pupils, by helping find and develop common interests such as pop music, fashion, etc
- Make sure that tables and chairs are at the right height and seating posture is correct, with feet on the ground. Note that sitting cross legged on the floor may be uncomfortable
- An angled board for writing and reading books may be beneficial

- Present small amounts of work at a time, set out tasks point by point, use tick boxes to aid completion of tasks, allow extra time and repetition
- Allow copying from paper next to them rather than a whiteboard
- Encourage different methods of recording apart from writing
- Use a line guide, window, ruler to aid easier reading
- In PE, give time to practice skills needed
- Offer lots of public praise at the appropriate time
- Always pick good points from the child's work.

Depending on the degree of severity, a child with dyspraxia may also benefit from regular interventions from some of the following:

**(Educational) Psychologist** if a child's difficulties are severe enough to require considerable in and out of school support, a full psychological assessment should be requested. When completed, this may lead to a Statement of Special Educational Needs.

**Occupational Therapists** can assess and diagnose dyspraxia and offer a range of interventions to help alleviate the problems. Some of the most commonly used approaches include Sensory Integration treatment and perceptual-motor training. This usually happens in a clinic environment, with OTs trained in Sensory Integration, where the child is given the opportunity to explore and interact with a sensory rich environment.

**Physiotherapists** help with gross motor skills, posture and general body image and management.

**Speech Therapists** can help young people who have speech and articulation difficulties. Be aware that treatment from too many therapists may result in the child missing a great deal of school, creating its own set of problems.

**Specialist Teachers** can support children within a mainstream setting to follow specific programmes and give advice to those working with them.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

### The Dyspraxia Foundation

The only national ADHD charity with advice and information for children, families, adults and professionals on all aspects of having

# Dyslexia

and living with ADHD. Local support groups are also listed on the website. Unfortunately their Helpline has been temporarily suspended from November 2011 due to funding difficulties. Website: [www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)  
Email: [dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](mailto:dyspraxia@dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk)

## Contact a Family

UK wide advice on all aspects of caring for a child with any special need, disability or rare disorder; national SEN help line; downloadable fact sheets and publications; Connected magazine; local support groups and parent reps; campaigns and research etc. Website: [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)  
Tel: 0808 808 3555  
Email: [info@cafamily.org.uk](mailto:info@cafamily.org.uk)

They also run a separate site Making Contact where you can share your experiences, get advice or local support from other parents with children with the same condition.

[www.makingcontact.org.uk](http://www.makingcontact.org.uk)

The Foundation for Conductive Education and Red Boot's Children's Services  
The FCE is a UK charity for children and adults with neurological motor disorders, mainly

## Cerebral Palsy

but also including dyspraxia. The FCE and Red Boot's Children's Services are based in Birmingham. There are programmes for children with dyspraxia aged birth to 13 years (group or individual sessions). Parents can self-refer.

Website: [www.conductive-education.org.uk/](http://www.conductive-education.org.uk/)  
Tel Red Boots: 0121 442 5540  
Email Red Boots: [ldebono@conductive-education.org.uk](mailto:ldebono@conductive-education.org.uk)

Various Conductive Education centres around the country offer different services, find a list here:

Website: [www.gillian-maguire.info/2009/08/ce-centres-in-uk-new-place.html](http://www.gillian-maguire.info/2009/08/ce-centres-in-uk-new-place.html)

**Hopscotch Children's Therapy Centre** London  
Hopscotch is an organisation providing assessments and treatment for children with Dyspraxia, Autism, ADHD and other developmental disorders. There is a clinic in Harley Street and North London which use Occupational Therapy & Sensory Integration Treatment and has links with The Child & Family Practice and the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children. Hopscotch also works in partnership with Starjumpz in Kent.  
Tel: 0207 486 8168  
Website: [www.hopscotchtherapy.co.uk](http://www.hopscotchtherapy.co.uk)  
Email: [info@hopscotchtherapy.co.uk](mailto:info@hopscotchtherapy.co.uk)

**Starjumpz Childrens Therapy Centre** Kent  
Established in 1989, starjumpz is a multidisciplinary centre offering assessment and therapy, including specialist Sensory Integration Therapy, for children and young people with Dyspraxia, Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), Sensory

Processing Disorder (SPD), ADD, ADHD, Aspergers, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Developmental and Learning Difficulties. Professional and parent referral. Website: [www.starjumpz.com](http://www.starjumpz.com)  
Email: [info@starjumpz.com](mailto:info@starjumpz.com)  
Tel: 01892 510257

**The 3D Centre for Specific Learning** Halifax  
An independent organisation for supporting children and adults with Specific Learning Difficulties – Dyslexia, Dyspraxia (DCD) and Dyscalculia through identification and assessment, tuition for children and courses for teachers and other school staff and professionals. Website: [www.the3dcentre.co.uk](http://www.the3dcentre.co.uk)  
Tel: 01422 365 500

**Therapy in Praxis Ltd** York  
A paediatric assessment, therapy and treatment service for children with dyspraxia, ADHD and sensory integration problems. Website: [www.therapy-in-praxis-ltd.co.uk](http://www.therapy-in-praxis-ltd.co.uk)  
Tel: 01904 468 855

**The Discovery Centre** Wales  
A post 16 and adult service that offers a diagnostic service from a team of specialists and a range of assessments and follow up advice and support for Development Coordination Disorder (DCD), dyspraxia, (ADHD, Asperger Syndrome, dyslexia but only if DCD/ dyspraxia present as well). Assessments for exam provision/workplace support; transition planning for FE, HE, workplace; organisation skills for education, home, workplace; goal setting; independent living skills. Self or professional referral. Website: [www.discovery.newport.ac.uk](http://www.discovery.newport.ac.uk)  
Tel: 01633 432330  
Email: [dyscoverycentre@newport.ac.uk](mailto:dyscoverycentre@newport.ac.uk)

## READING

See the Cambian information sheet 'Books – where to find them' a list of specialist publishers with a huge range of books including those below.

**Hands on Dyspraxia – Supporting Children and Young People with Sensory and Motor Learning Challenges.**  
Author Jill Christmas, 2009.

**Developmental Dyspraxia – Identification and Intervention: A Manual for Parents and Professionals** – 2nd edition. Author: Madeleine Portwood, 2007. ISBN 978-1-85346-573-4.

**Dyspraxia: A Guide for Teachers and Parents.**  
Authors: Kate Ripley, Bob Daines, Jenny Barrett, 1997. Includes resource materials. ISBN 978-1-85346-444-7.

**Understanding Developmental Dyspraxia – A Textbook for Students and Professionals.**  
Author: Madeleine Portwood, 2000. ISBN 978-1-85346-574-1.

## INTERNET SITES

[www.matts-hideout.co.uk](http://www.matts-hideout.co.uk) a website set up and run by Matt in 2001 to help him come to terms with his dyspraxia. The updated site aims to offer support and hope for young people with Dyspraxia and their families, while providing information about what it is really like for people living with hidden disabilities.

[www.dyspraxia.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxia.org.uk) a website with a video explaining one person's experience of Dyspraxia and a comments section.

[www.dyspraxiateens.org.uk](http://www.dyspraxiateens.org.uk) a forum with resources, advice, and message board.

**Acknowledgement:** We would like to thank Starjumpz Children's Therapy Centre for their help in giving advice for and checking the content of this information sheet.

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All the information sheets are checked and amended annually. Please ensure you have the current version.



Cambian is the largest provider of specialist residential education and care for young people with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other associated complex needs in the United Kingdom. Cambian is trusted by hundreds of parents and over 70 Local Education Authorities. [www.cambiagroup.com](http://www.cambiagroup.com)

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CAM613 Date of preparation 22/10/18