

Developmental Coordination Disorder

I. What is Developmental Coordination Disorder?

Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) are significantly slower in the development of motor co-ordination than their peers of the same age. The exact cause of DCD is not yet known but is not due to intellectual impairment or brain lesion. Children with DCD often appear to be clumsy and they may have difficulties in their studies and daily activities as a result.

II. What are the symptoms of children with Developmental Coordination Disorder?

Pre-school period

- Delay in gross and fine motor development, e.g. clumsiness in picking up small objects, slow in walking up and down stairs
- Often bump into obstacles
- Fall over easily
- When eating, tend to be messy and not wanting to use chopsticks, preferring instead to use spoons or even hands
- Have difficulty in pencil grip or using scissors
- Weak in building blocks and jigsaw puzzles

School age period

Physical aspect

- Fall over easily when walking or running
- Fail to judge distance accurately and easily bump into people or objects, getting hurt or bruised
- Have difficulty in playing physical games with peers, e.g. climbing, playing football, hopscotch or hide-and-seek
- Commented on by teachers or classmates for his/her clumsy movements in physical education lessons
- Have difficulty in learning new physical activities, e.g. rope skipping, swimming or ball games

Learning aspect

- Frequently adjust body posture during writing to suit the position of the exercise books, due to poor skills in handling pencil
- Slow at copying and writing
- Messy and untidy handwriting due to difficulty in manipulating the pen despite paying attention and effort
- Fail to cut, fold or paste objects according to the shapes required when doing handicrafts

Self-care aspect

- Have difficulty in buttoning up or tying shoelaces, often appear to be dressed shabbily
- Easily drop objects or spill drinks

III. How does Developmental Coordination Disorder affect children?

Academic performance

- Particularly weak in physical education, art and design as well as subjects that involve copying and writing
- Often fail to finish examination papers or lose marks due to slow or untidy handwriting

Family life

- Weak in self-care and often rely on other family members for tasks such as buttoning, tying shoelaces and packing school bag
- Prone to accidents like breaking objects and overturning food plates, and is therefore often scolded by parents

Social life

- Evade physical activities involving peers at playgrounds and athletic games etc.
- Being rejected by peers in group games, the child often prefers to play with younger children

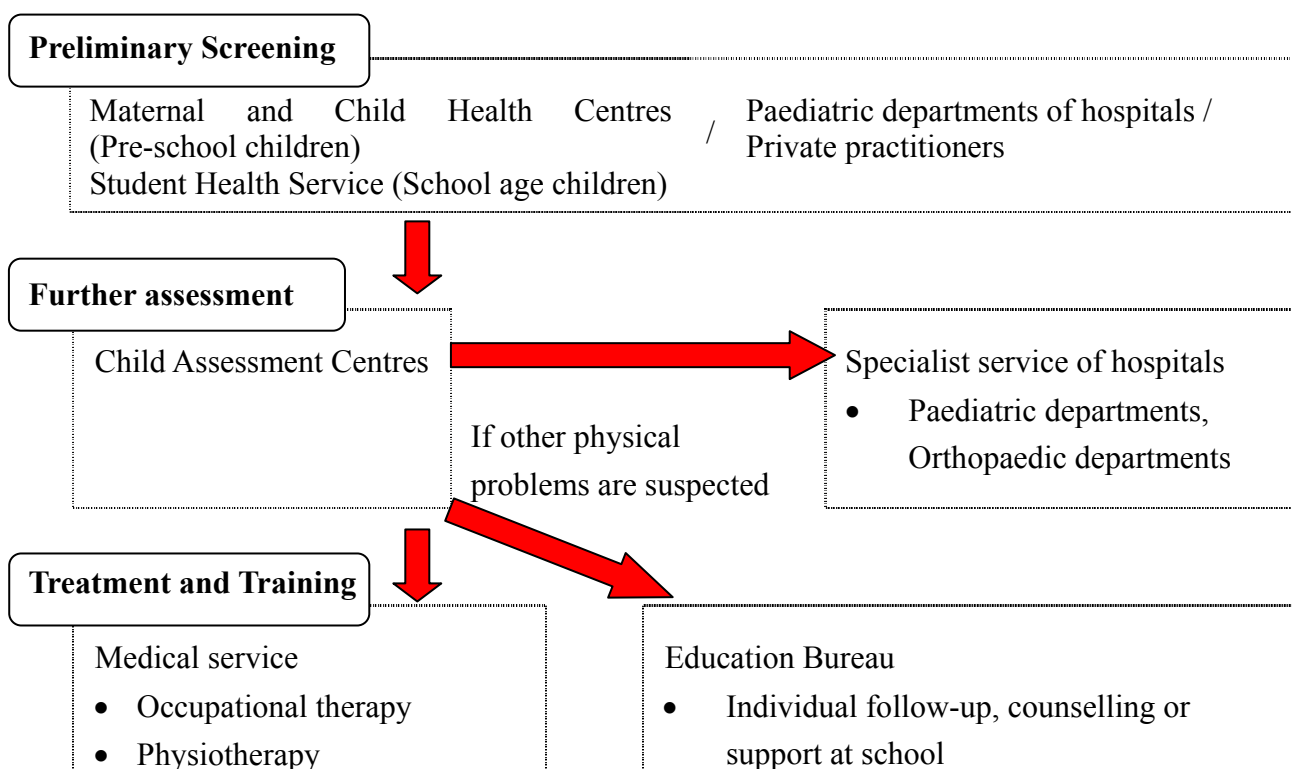
Emotion and behaviour

- Cries or loses temper when the child has difficulty coping with daily tasks due to poor motor coordination
- Evades people and social activities with excuses to cover up his/her weaknesses

Self-confidence

- Lack self-confidence because the child is often regarded as being “clumsy”, “slow in reaction” or “careless”

IV. Where can parents seek help if their child is suspected to have Developmental Coordination Disorder?



V. Can Developmental Coordination Disorder be cured?

Studies have shown that DCD will not disappear with age. Yet, children will show significant improvement in familiar physical activities and daily tasks after training.

VI. How can parents help their child with Developmental Coordination Disorder?

Early detection

- Arrange proper training for the child as early as possible to minimise resistance to physical activities and to boost self-confidence

Understand and face the problem

- Get to know the child's capabilities and potentials, accept his/her limitations in physical abilities and have more realistic expectations

Emphasise participation

- Praise the child for efforts made, and emphasise participation instead of achievements

Encourage prior practice

- Encourage the child to do more prior practice when learning a new physical activity. Do not compare with other children of the same age from the onset.

Accumulate successful experiences

- When teaching the child to do physical activities, break down the process into several parts. Give instructions in a step-by-step manner, from simple to complicated ones, so that it may be simpler for the child and may help him/her to master the skills and to accumulate successful experiences.

Liase with teachers

- Discuss with teachers on how to create successful experiences for the child in various aspects such as writing and copying, art and design and physical education

Enquiry Numbers and Related Websites

Government Bureau / Departments

- Department of Health
 - Child Assessment Service 2246 6633
www.dhcas.gov.hk
 - Family Health Service 2961 8855
(Maternal and Child Health Centres) www.fhs.gov.hk
 - Student Health Service 2349 2772
www.dh.gov.hk
- Education Bureau 2891 0088
(24-Hour Hotline) www.edb.gov.hk

Other Organisations

- Hospital Authority 2300 6555
(General Enquiry) www.ha.org.hk

Overseas

- Canchild Centre for Childhood Disability Research www.fhs.mcmaster.ca/canchild
- Dyspraxia Foundation www.dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk

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