

Dyspraxia/DCD and Physical Exercise for Adults



Developmental coordination disorder (DCD), also known as Dyspraxia in the UK, is a common disorder affecting fine and/or gross motor coordination in children and adults. It can also affect speech. DCD is a lifelong condition, formally recognised by international organisations including the World Health Organisation. DCD is distinct from other motor disorders such as cerebral palsy and stroke, and occurs across the range of intellectual abilities. Individuals may vary in how their difficulties present: these may change over time depending on environmental demands and life experiences.¹

Whilst dyspraxia/DCD is primarily a motor disorder, in many cases individuals may experience difficulties with memory, perception and processing along with poor planning, organisation and sequencing skills which can have a significant negative impact on everyday activities. Although, the condition may occur in isolation, it frequently coexists with other conditions such as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder), dyslexia, language disorders and social, emotional and behavioural impairments.²

Physical exercise is important for everyone. It develops and maintains our physical fitness and overall health. Public Health England reported that the results for 2015 showed that 62.9% of adults were overweight or obese (67.8% of men and 58.1% of women)³. Those who have DCD /dyspraxia are 4 times more likely to become obese⁴ and are less physically fit and more overweight especially in girls⁵. It is therefore important that those with DCD/dyspraxia are encouraged to be as physically active as possible.

Please remember that all activity should be safe and achievable. If you have not exercised before we recommend that you consult a medical practitioner before embarking on any programme of exercise. Careful consideration should be given to which physical activities are suitable for those who have hypermobile joints to ensure that the joints do not dislocate. Always start and build up slowly. If you are starting at a gym, ask for an instructor to devise a personal programme for you. Ensure you wear the correct protective equipment (e.g. cycling helmet, padding, wrist guards, protective eyewear etc) and if you are taking part in a sport with a coach or instructor that you explain your difficulties so that they can provide a safe and supportive environment. The aim is to make sure you enjoy physical activity, have fun and stay fit for life.

Why adults should exercise:

- maintains flexibility and strong healthy muscles, joints so you can perform everyday tasks with ease

¹ <http://www.movementmattersuk.org>

² <http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/about-dyspraxia/dyspraxia-glance>

³ https://www.noo.org.uk/NOO_about_obesity/adult_obesity/UK_prevalence_and_trends

⁴ CAIRNEY et al (2011) Obesity Risk in Children with Developmental Coordination Disorder: What do we know and what should we do? Dyspraxia Foundation Professional Journal (10) 21 – 32

⁵ LIFSHITZ et al (2015) Gender Differences, in Physical Fitness and Overweight Between Children with and Without DCD: DCD 11 Conference, Oral presentation

- Maintains good posture, balance and general coordination
- Less likely to become overweight
- Reduces risk of a range of diseases, such as coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes
- Improves self-esteem
- Reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety

How much physical activity should a child do?

- The N.H.S.⁶ recommends that adults over 19 should do either:
 - at least 150 minutes of **moderate aerobic activity** such as cycling or fast walking every week, **and strength exercises** on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms)

or

- 75 minutes of **vigorous aerobic activity**, such as running or a game of singles tennis every week, **and strength exercises** on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Or

- A mix of **moderate and vigorous aerobic activity** every week. For example, two 30-minute runs plus 30 minutes of fast walking equates to 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, **and strength exercises** on two or more days a week that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

The NHS recommends one way to do your recommended 150 minutes of weekly physical activity is to do 30 minutes on 5 days a week. You can even break up vigorous exercise in 10 minute chunks.

How to do this:

Moderate aerobic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimise the amount of sitting down you do each day • walk to shops/ friend's house • get off one stop early from the bus or if you drive, park a little further away so you have to walk • walking fast
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⁶ <http://www.nhs.uk/chq/Pages/819.aspx?CategoryID=52&SubCategoryID=142>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water aerobics • pushing a lawn mower • hiking • jumping on a trampoline (care if are hypermobile ie has bendy joints) • riding a bicycle especially if there are a few hills – if you cannot ride try using a static bike • dancing • swimming • rock climbing • gymnastics • tennis
<p>Strength exercises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to do at least one set with 8 – 12 repetitions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ gym work such as lifting weights ○ working with resistance bands ○ doing exercises that use your own body weight, such as push-ups and sit-ups • cycling • ride a scooter • ten pin bowling • golf • horse riding • heavy gardening, such as digging and shovelling • yoga
<p>Vigorous exercise (working hard enough to be breathing hard and fast, and your heart rate has gone up quite a bit)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dancing • fast swimming • martial arts • running up and down stairs • fast walking • jogging or running • riding a bike fast or on hills • singles tennis • football • skipping rope • aerobics • gymnastics

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • martial arts • hiking uphill
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Sport activity

It is important that you find an exercise regime that suits you as well as an activity/sport that you enjoy so try different ones. Many people with dyspraxia/DCD prefer to do individual sports rather than team sports. You do not need to participate in competitive sport but just playing is a great way to exercise. Examples of sports/activities those with dyspraxia/DCD have reported they enjoy:

Tennis	Badminton	Golf
Swimming	Archery	Canoeing
Sailing	Table tennis	Rowing
Brisk walking/treking	Scuba diving	Gym work
Horse riding	Swimming	Rock climbing
Shooting	Martial arts	Weight lifting
Kayaking	10 pin bowling	trampoling (care should be taken for those who are hypermobile as they are more prone to dislocate)
Cycling	Zumba	
Skating	Yoga/pilates	

Further information available from:
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