

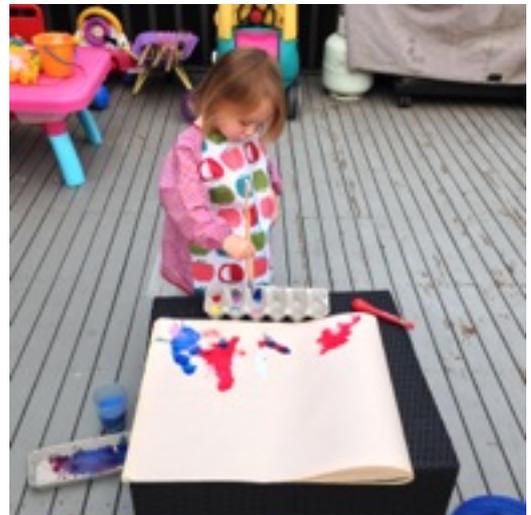
Developmental Co-ordination Disorder

Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD) is a condition that affects 5 to 6% of school aged children. In it's definition these children do not have any other identifiable medical or neurological reason for their symptoms. These children have difficulty with their gross motor skills, and at times their fine motor as well. They have difficulty in planning and co-ordinating tasks and this effects their participation and execution of everyday life and play.

Often children with DCD are described as being clumsy, awkward or are often perceived as trying to be 'a clown', falling over often. These children are often weaker than their peers which also affects their gross motor performance. Functional difficulties parents often report is that they have difficulty going up and down stairs, learning to tie their shoe laces and performing age appropriate self-care tasks.

Functional Indications of DCD

- Slower to perform self-care tasks.
- Poor balance, falling or tripping easily.
- Difficulty throwing and catching a ball
- Poor co-ordination and difficulty planning movements/tasks.
- Poor spatial awareness
- Slower to develop a handedness
- Withdrawing from activities or games associated with failure.
- Problems picking up small or moving objects.



Whilst it was previously believed that these young children would outgrow their gross motor difficulties as they progress into adolescence and adulthood, recent evidence suggests that it persists. These children can learn how to perform certain motor skills well, however, when faced with a new skill or a higher age appropriate skill they encounter problems again. It is also important to recognise that their poor performance in gross motor skills can impact on their social interactions emotional and academic development.

How can physiotherapy help?

Our assessment entails a detailed history of the child and their developmental milestones . We then carryout a comprehensive assessment of their functional abilities including gross motor skills and compare this to normal references for their age to establish areas of difficulty.

There is good evidence to support strengthening children with DCD and practicing their functional gross motor skills is effective in teaching them their age appropriate tasks. Individual spatial or object tracking problems are also addressed and we can teach the parents how to break tasks/skills down into smaller components. Our sessions and home programs then teach the child through repetition and fun, achievable games how to perform these skills. Strategies, like those used for gross motor tasks are also applicable to everyday activities, teaching and educating their parents on how to use these at home is a part of the treatment process too.

A great way to engage children is through fun activities that are achievable yet focus on particular skills that they are having difficulty with. We will give the family 'fun homework' to continue to establish participation in learning their gross motor tasks. In general, it is great to get these children enrolled into activities such as taekwondo and dance classes where it is individual and focusses on body awareness, strength and control.