

Handy Handouts®

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Dyspraxia – Symptoms and Treatment

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Dyspraxia—also known as developmental coordination disorder—is a disorder/disability that affects motor skill development, making it difficult for individuals to plan and/or complete motor tasks as simple as waving goodbye or as complex as brushing teeth. Dyspraxia, however, does not affect the one's intelligence, although it can cause learning problems in children.

The National Center for Learning Disabilities estimates that dyspraxia affects approximately six percent of the general population.

Someone with dyspraxia can learn to function independently by special learning methods and repeated practice of basic tasks. Occupational, physical, or speech therapy for some individuals may also be helpful.

Does dyspraxia ever go away?

Unfortunately, dyspraxia is a lifelong disability. Its severity, symptoms, and effects vary from person to person at different stages of life. **Dyspraxia affects many basic functions required for independent daily living and falls into one or more of the following categories:**



Ideomotor Dyspraxia – Completing single-step motor tasks such as combing hair and waving goodbye.



Ideational Dyspraxia – Completing multi-step tasks: brushing teeth, making a bed, putting clothes on in order, buttoning, buckling, or lacing.



Oromotor Dyspraxia – Coordinating muscle movements needed to pronounce words (also known as apraxia of speech).



Constructional Dyspraxia – Establishing spatial relationships, e.g., accurately positioning or moving objects from one place to another.

Dyspraxia often exists along with learning disabilities: dyslexia (e.g., trouble reading, writing and spelling), dyscalculia (e.g., trouble with mathematics), and other conditions that impact learning such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Some symptoms of all of these disorders are similar in nature.

Weaknesses in comprehension, information processing, and listening can also contribute to the troubles experienced by people with dyspraxia. They may also have low self-esteem, suffer from depression, and have other emotional and behavioral issues.

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(cont.)

Young Children Have Trouble With:	School-Age Children Have Trouble With:	Teens and Adults Have Trouble With:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to walk, jump, hop, skip, throw, or catch a ball • Pronouncing words and being understood • Establishing left- or right-handedness • Bumping into things • Moving the eyes— instead, moving the whole head • Being sensitive to touch: irritated by clothing on skin, hair brushing, nail cutting, or teeth-brushing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor pencil grip and letter formation, slow handwriting • Fine motor skills: holding a pencil, buttoning, cutting with scissors • Playing sports, riding a bike, and other activities requiring coordination • Sensing direction • Speaking at a normal rate or in way that can be easily understood • Making social connections due to speech challenges • Phobias and obsessive behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech control— volume, pitch, articulation • Writing and typing • Over- or undersensitivity to light, touch, space, taste, or smells • Personal grooming and other self-care activities • Cooking or other household chores • Driving • Clumsiness

Are there warning signs for dyspraxia?

Babies with dyspraxia may avoid crawling, rolling over, and other tasks involving motor skills. As they get older, children with dyspraxia are prone to other problems listed above. *Having these problems does not necessarily mean one has dyspraxia.* If problems continue, consider having your child tested by trained professionals. You and your child may benefit from special help. If these troubles continue over time, the NCLD suggests you consider having your child tested for dyslexia which sometimes accompanies dyspraxia.

Is there treatment for dyspraxia?

Yes. Early identification and intervention can

help, but there is no cure. Depending upon the severity of one's dyspraxia, working with occupational, speech, and physical therapists can improve a person's ability to function and succeed independently. For a young child having trouble communicating or moving steadily, parents must offer patience, encouragement, help, and support.

Children with dyspraxia must practice the simplest tasks step-by-step and progress toward more complex activities. Engage your child with easy physical activities that help develop their coordination, which in turn increases confidence. Encourage your child or teen's friendships to help broaden their social experiences and understanding of social relationships.

Resources:

Dyspraxia Foundation USA. *Symptoms*. Retrieved September, 2013, from <http://www.dyspraxiausa.org/symptoms/>.

Medical News Today. (2013). *What is dyspraxia? How is dyspraxia treated?* Retrieved September, 2013, from <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/151951.php>

National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2012). *What is dyspraxia?* Retrieved September, 2013, from <http://www.nclld.org/types-learning-disabilities/dyspraxia/what-is-dyspraxia>

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