



What are motor skills?

Motor skills refer to the ability to use our muscles to control our body and have controlled movement. We use our hands and fingers for tasks, as well as our larger body parts for bigger “gross motor” skills.

Why are motor skills important?

We use our muscles every day. Movement is how we engage with our environment, complete daily tasks, as well as engage in work and leisure. As children are still growing and developing, it does take time for their motor skills to become refined and controlled, but we do this through engaging in lots of different activities that use our brains and muscles.

When motor skills are challenging

- It is really important that we support children that might find it difficult to coordinate their movements, as it can have an impact on their physical health and mental wellbeing.
- When the impact is significant, a child may be considered as having a Developmental Coordination Disorder, which affects about 5-6% of children and is commonly seen with other diagnosis such as ADHD, Language Impairment and other mental health difficulties.

Signs of Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)

Include difficulty with tasks including:

- Sport (including learning to jump, hop, bike ride)
- Self-care – such as tying shoelaces, using buttons, getting clothing on
- School tasks such as writing and scissor skills

Children with DCD also may need additional time for tasks, be easily distracted, disorganised, appear “clumsy”, and also display challenges with regulating their behaviour and emotions. For more information, see:

<https://dotwa.org.au/v2/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/DOTWA-DCD-Info-Sheet.pdf>

<https://www.movegrowengage.com.au>

<https://canchild.ca/en/diagnoses/developmental-coordination-disorder/dcd-educational-materials-for-home-school-physicians-and-other-health-professionals>

How to help?

It is best you seek the advice of your teacher, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or GP if you feel this is a factor for your child as there are strategies that can be put in place to support them. A formal assessment needs to be conducted to determine if your child has DCD.

A key factor for all children, including those with motor challenges is to ensure they continue to engage in lots of daily physical activities. Some sports that require a lot of eye hand coordination (bat and ball sports) might be very challenging so your child may avoid those tasks, but sports and physical activity that children will experience greater success with include:

- Yoga
- Swimming
- Running
- Martial arts
- Parkour
- Gymnastics
- General outdoor play

GET MOVING!

It is recommended that all children (5-12 years) engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day. It is great to be involved in organised activities but it isn't essential. There are lots of local groups that run programs in the community for children for a fee however there are funding programs available if you are eligible for support.

The following websites have lots of local links and information on the rebates available:

<https://www.dsr.wa.gov.au/funding/individuals/kidsport>

<https://www.melvillecity.com.au/things-to-do/community-sport-and-recreation>

<https://www.fremantle.wa.gov.au/residents/environmental-health/physical-activity>

<https://www.cockburn.wa.gov.au/Recreation-and-Attractions/Sport-and-Recreation>

References:

Dotwa.org.au

Australian Dept of Health, Physical Activity Guidelines, 2014