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Developmental coordination disorder

Developmental coordination disorder is a childhood disorder. It leads to poor coordination and clumsiness.

Causes

A small number of school-age children have some kind of developmental coordination disorder. Children with this disorder may:

- Have trouble holding objects
- Have an unsteady walk
- Run into other children
- Trip over their own feet

Developmental coordination disorder may occur alone or with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). It may also occur with other learning disorders, such as communication disorders or disorder of written expression.

Symptoms

Children with developmental coordination disorder have problems with motor coordination compared to other children the same age. Some common symptoms include:

- Clumsiness
- Delays in sitting up, crawling, and walking
- Problems with sucking and swallowing during first year of life
- Problems with gross motor coordination (for example, jumping, hopping, or standing on one foot)
- Problems with visual or fine motor coordination (for example, writing, using scissors, tying shoelaces, or tapping one finger to another)

Exams and Tests

Physical causes and other types of learning disabilities must be ruled out before the diagnosis can be confirmed.

Treatment

Physical education and perceptual motor training (combining movement with tasks that require thinking, like math or reading) are the best ways to treat coordination disorder. Using a computer to take notes may help children who have trouble writing.

Children with developmental coordination disorder are more likely to be overweight than other children their age. Encouraging physical activity is important to prevent obesity.

Outlook (Prognosis)

How well a child does depends on the severity of the disorder. The disorder does not get worse over time. It most often continues into adulthood.

Possible Complications

Developmental coordination disorder can lead to:

- Learning problems
- Low self-esteem resulting from poor ability at sports and teasing by other children
- Repeated injuries
- Weight gain as a result of not wanting to participate in physical activities, such as sports

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if you are concerned about your child's development.

Prevention

Families who are affected by this condition should try to recognize problems early and have them treated. Early treatment will lead to future success.

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