

# Physiotherapists and Developmental Coordination Disorder



## What is a physiotherapist?

According to the Australian Physiotherapy Association:

“Physiotherapists help you get the most out of life. They help you move well, recover from injury, reduce pain and stiffness, increase mobility and prevent further injury. They listen to your needs to tailor a treatment specific to your condition. As first contact practitioners, you don’t need a doctor’s referral to see a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists, doctors, and other health professionals will often work as part of a team to plan and manage treatment for a specific condition.”

## What role might a physiotherapist play in DCD diagnosis?

Physiotherapists are experts in performing age-appropriate assessments to identify key areas of concern or deficit in motor skill performance, and can assess the impact this has on functional participation in everyday activities. Physiotherapists can assist in establishing when motor deficits first appeared and can conduct functional assessments that assist in ruling out other conditions that cause motor impairment. As a result, physiotherapists can play a crucial role, alongside paediatricians and other medical and allied health team members, in the diagnosis of DCD.

## What role can a physiotherapist play in intervention for DCD?

Physiotherapists use a person-centred, evidence-based, inter-professional approach to help children and adults with DCD identify functional goals and work towards these goals. Physiotherapists provide interventions, advocacy and support services to help children and adults with DCD to improve their participation in everyday activities at home, school and in the community, as well as to develop age-appropriate skills in motor planning, motor coordination, postural control, and sensory processing.

## How do you find a physiotherapist?

The Australian Physiotherapy Association provides a ‘Find a Physio’ page where people from the public can search for a registered physiotherapist in their local area. It is possible to refine this search to ‘paediatrics’, or ‘neurology’ or ‘disability’, which will help identify a physiotherapist with the right skills for working with a child or adult with DCD. See: <https://choose.physio/find-a-physio>

## What to ask when looking for a physiotherapist.

1. Do you know what DCD is and how to assess if a child/adult has DCD?
2. Do you have experience working with children/adults with DCD?
3. What is your approach to working with children/adults with DCD?
4. Do you provide any specific services for children/adults with DCD?