

# Clumsiness



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## What is clumsiness?

Clumsiness is a tendency to drop items or knock against objects more often than most people.

Clumsiness can occur through a variety of reasons; some will be temporary, some might be as a result of other special needs e.g. cerebral palsy whilst others are more deep-seated and long lasting.

Anyone can become temporarily clumsy through tiredness, excitement, anxiety, drink or drugs, illness or injury. Other more serious causes include brain damage, various diseases of the nerves and muscles, delayed maturation or physical limitations.

## Living with clumsiness

Most of us experience a degree of clumsiness at some time or another resulting in a broken cup whilst washing up for example! For a small number of people the tendency to trip over or drop things frequently makes even simple tasks difficult.

Frustration can arise when an individual fails to achieve a task which they see as simple but which their body refuses to complete. Teasing or lack of understanding from others can compound these feelings.

A left-handed person trying to use items designed for someone right handed can appear clumsy. This can be overcome by ensuring that the correct equipment (e.g. left handed scissors) is available.

## Practical Tips

- Obviously knowing the capabilities and skills of the individual concerned is essential. Opportunities will need to be provided for using such skills.
- During activities that require a certain amount of dexterity be aware that simple gadgets can make life much easier – try

using thicker or different coloured cords for knotting or pencils with large grips when drawing for example.

- A common-sense approach to potentially difficult games and activities can prevent further frustration, for example, if playing a game involving the carrying of water, partly fill the container rather than have it brimming over!

## What else do I need to know?

- Particular attention needs to be paid to safety wherever you are. Remember that any simple obstacle at ground or knee level can be dangerous if you fall over it. Tidiness will need to become automatic.
- Take extra care with activities which, although simple, may be potentially dangerous, such as cooking, fire lighting using an axe or saw!
- Extra time and patience will be needed as any task requiring coordination will take practice.

## Further Information

Discuss with the individual and/or their parents/guardians the extent to which help is needed and learn any practical tips they have to offer.

## The Scout Information Centre

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