

General Information on Dwarf Conditions



The following information has been written by those with a great deal of experience in this area. The information is provided as **guidance** only, allowing you to be more informed in your approach to being a more **inclusive** coach. No two people are the same; as such, please ensure your first step is always to speak to the person - understand their **abilities** and goals, and never assume.

What are the Dwarf Conditions?

There are over 200 types of restricted growth that can be grouped together as dwarf conditions – the most common being achondroplasia.

An individual participating in sport can be involved in most activities, and the Dwarf Sports Association UK (DSAUK) is the leading organisation for sport for people with dwarf conditions. DSAUK believes sport is important for participants' development and integration with their peers. Many dwarf athletes enjoy a spectrum of different sports.

General Characteristics of People with Dwarf Conditions

Regular exercise can make a big difference to the lifestyle and well-being of a person with a dwarf condition. There are a few skeletal and potential joint-stability problems sports coaches should bear in mind when working with participants with a dwarf condition:

- Many people with achondroplasia have a kyphosis or scoliosis of their spine. Constant shock to the back can cause damage to this area.



General Information on Dwarf Conditions



- Participants may have a spinal stenosis, which is a pinching of the spinal column caused by having restricted room within the vertebrae for the spinal column to pass through.
- People with restricted growth can have quite lax joints, and their elbows, hips and knees, especially, can be unstable. This is usually seen in the joints being extremely flexible. Many dwarf athletes can have a bowing of the legs, which may result in problems with their ankles.
- The more involved in regular exercise individuals are, the better the muscle tone around problem areas is maintained, and, therefore, the more stable these joints become.
- Weight can be an issue for some people with restricted growth. Keeping weight off and regular exercise can prevent and delay the need for invasive surgery to stabilise back and joint problems.

Warning

DSAuk discourages its members from certain sports that may repeatedly apply a shock to the spinal area. In general, DSAuk is of the opinion that trampolining, high jump, long jump and gymnastics have potential to cause long-term damage to people with restricted growth conditions. In athletics, the use of hurdles for training should be carefully considered on an individual participant basis.

Popular Sports DSAuk Athletes Compete in at National and Paralympic Level or for a Means of Exercise

Athletics: Dwarf athletes compete in sprint events up to 200m. They are also particularly good throwers, enjoying javelin, shot and discus events. There is a Paralympic pathway for some throwing events; Class F40 is the dwarf class for field events at Paralympic level.

Badminton: Dwarf players in Class 2 play a standard game of badminton to standard rules. Class 1 players play in a half court. This sport is particularly popular with dwarf athletes. There are European and World events to strive for. At international level, there is one class, which is SS6; this requires players to play on a standard court with standard height nets.

Basketball: Basketball is played to standard rules with standard height nets for 16+ year olds. The under-16s team uses nets at 8' 6" height. Basketball is played in leagues at the National Dwarf Games and World Dwarf Games.

Boccia: This is a sport enjoyed by many dwarf athletes. There is a pan-disability league that dwarf players are welcome to join. DSAuk also runs a national championships every year.

Cycling: Cycling is fast becoming a more popular sport for dwarfs. There are custom-built bikes and standard models that can be ridden and raced, and a cycling time trial event at the DSAuk National Games.

Football: Football is played to seven-a-side rules using five-a-side goals. There is a successful Great Britain team that competes at the World Dwarf Games, and there are junior and senior leagues played at the DSAuk National Games.

Hockey: Unihockey is a popular team sport played by both junior and senior players. It is generally only played at the DSAuk National Games.

Powerlifting: The powerlift takes the form of a bench press. Dwarf lifters are gifted in this event and can lift many times their own body weight. This is a sport that requires expert coaching and tuition. There is a Paralympic pathway in this event. In general, lifters will need a Velcro strap to safely secure them to the bench.

Swimming: Swimming is a particularly good sport as it is non-load-bearing on the joints. There are the S6 and S7 classes for dwarf swimmers, and also Paralympic events.

Table tennis: Dwarf players play to standard rules on a standard table. There is a Paralympic route in Class 7, though this is a mixed class with average height players. Table tennis is popular at the National Dwarf Games and World Dwarf Games.

Other sports: Other sports enjoyed and organised by DSAuk regions include archery, canoeing, climbing, fencing, outward-bound weekends, sailing, shooting, skiing, snowboarding and tenpin bowling. Other sports have also been trialled at taster days.

The National Dwarf Games are generally held on May Day bank holiday over three days, when all the aforementioned sports are played at a competitive level.

© sports coach UK, 2012

For further information and support, visit:

www.dsauk.org

For a two-hour workshop aimed at increasing awareness and confidence of coaching disabled people in sport, visit www.sportscoachuk.org/coach-disabled-sport

Also, visit www.sportscoachuk.org/inclusion-coaches for further useful information.