



Down Syndrome

What is Down syndrome?



Down syndrome is the most common genetic condition. One in every 733 babies is born with Down syndrome. The most common form of Down syndrome is called Trisomy 21 because it involves an extra copy of the 21st chromosome. The additional copy can be traced to either the child's father or mother.

Down syndrome can occur in children of all races and incomes. It happens as the baby first

develops, and is not related to anything a mother does during her pregnancy. Older mothers have an increased chance of having a child with Down syndrome.

Children with Down syndrome may have common physical traits, such as lower muscle tone, upward slanted eyes, a small mouth and larger tongue, and smaller features overall.

Most children with Down syndrome do have

mental retardation or cognitive delays in the mild to moderate range. Physical delays are also usually present. Children with Down syndrome learn to sit, walk, talk, play, and do most other activities, but it usually takes longer than their typical peers.

Fifty years ago, babies with Down syndrome were routinely placed in institutions, rather than being raised with their families. Today, nearly every baby with Down syndrome is raised at home as a loved and valued member of the family.

It is important that children with Down syndrome receive early intervention services, such as speech and physical therapy. Equally important is good health care, and positive support from family, friends, and the community.

Ways to help your child:

ONE

Every child with Down syndrome can learn. Even as a baby, include your child in every family activity, from cooking and eating family meals to taking walks. These experiences will broaden your child's learning, language skills, and feeling of belonging.

TWO

Take your child to regular well-baby and well-child visits. Work closely with your doctor to monitor your child for illnesses that are common to people with Down syndrome.

Resources:

Call [Early Access](tel:1-888-IAKIDS1) at 1-888-IAKIDS1 if you have child development questions or concerns.

Link to an [Area Education Agency](#) in your region for more child and family information:

www.iowaaea.org. Find a contact for your area under the [AEA Directory](#) tab.

Babies with Down Syndrome: A New Parents' Guide by Susan J. Skallerup offers great information on the medical, developmental, and social aspects of Down syndrome.

The [National Down Syndrome Society](#) helps families find local healthcare providers and support.

Specialized healthcare for children with Down syndrome is available at the [Child Health Specialty Clinics](#) at the University of Iowa.

This factsheet is part of an informational series for parents of children ages 0-5, developed by the Iowa Department of Education Early Childhood Services Bureau. (Updated April 2010)

Three important facts about Down syndrome:

1. One in every 733 babies is born with Down syndrome. There are more than 400,000 individuals in the U.S. living with Down syndrome.

2. Children with Down syndrome have an increased risk for heart defects, respiratory and hearing problems, childhood leukemia and thyroid problems. Many of these conditions are treatable, and most

people with Down syndrome lead healthy, happy lives.

3. All children with Down syndrome experience cognitive delays, but they are usually mild to moderate and are outweighed by the many talents and strengths of each individual. Proper medical care, a good education, and a strong support system enable children with Down

THREE

Find creative ways to help your child learn. If language is delayed, teach your child simple signs — up, more, please, thank you, milk — so they can “talk” to you. Help your child adapt until milestones are reached.

FOUR

Find support in your area by attending a local family support group. Other families of children with Down syndrome are a priceless resource. You will find encouragement, answers to questions, and friendship when you connect with a group.