



Facts About Down Syndrome

National Association for Down Syndrome (NADS)



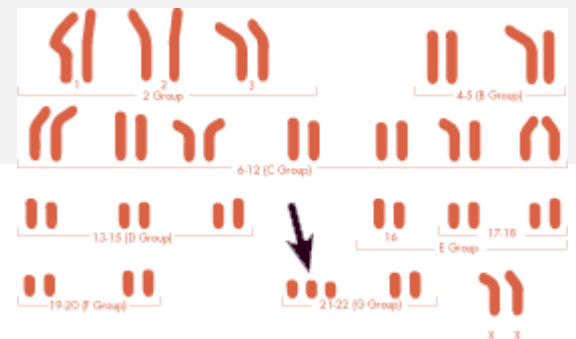
What is Down Syndrome?

- Down syndrome is a genetic condition that causes delays in physical and intellectual development.
- It occurs in one in every 691 live births.
- Individuals with Down syndrome have 47 chromosomes instead of the usual 46. It is the most frequently occurring chromosomal disorder.
- Down syndrome is not related to race, nationality, religion or socioeconomic status.
- The most important fact to know about individuals with Down syndrome is that they are more like others than they are different.



Diagnosis

- Down syndrome is usually identified at birth or shortly thereafter.
- Initially the diagnosis is based on physical characteristics that are commonly seen in babies with Down syndrome
 - These include low muscle tone, a single crease across the palm of the hand, a slightly flattened facial profile and an upward slant to the eyes.
- The diagnosis must be confirmed by a chromosome study (karyotype).
 - A karyotype provides a visual display of the chromosomes grouped by their size, number and shape. Chromosomes may be studied by examining blood or tissue cells.





Cause

- Down syndrome is usually caused by an error in cell division called nondisjunction.
- It is not known why this occurs. However, it is known that the error occurs at conception and is not related to anything the mother did during pregnancy.
- It has been known for some time that the incidence of Down syndrome increases with advancing maternal age.
 - However, 80% of children with Down syndrome are born to women under 35 years of age.



Learning & Development

- It is important to remember that while children and adults with Down syndrome experience developmental delays, they also have many talents and gifts and should be given the opportunity and encouragement to develop them.
- Most children with Down syndrome have mild to moderate impairments but it is important to note that they are more like other children than they are different.
- Early Intervention services should be provided shortly after birth. These services should include physical, speech and developmental therapies.
- Most children attend their neighborhood schools, some in regular classes and others in special education classes. Some children have more significant needs and require a more specialized program.
- Some high school graduates with Down syndrome participate in post-secondary education.
 - Many adults with Down syndrome are capable of working in the community, but some require a more structured environment.



Health Issues

- Many children with Down syndrome have health complications beyond the usual childhood illnesses.
- Approximately 40% of the children have congenital heart defects. Some of the heart conditions require surgery while others only require careful monitoring.
- Children with Down syndrome have a higher incidence of infection, respiratory, vision and hearing problems as well as thyroid and other medical conditions.
- However, with appropriate medical care most children and adults with Down syndrome can lead healthy lives.
- The average life expectancy of individuals with Down syndrome is 55 years, with many living into their sixties and seventies.



Common Behavior Concerns

- Wandering/ Running off
 - Visual supports (STOP sign)
- Stubborn/Oppositional Behavior
 - May be a way of communicating frustration/lack of understanding
 - Very good at distracting parents/teachers when challenged with a difficult task
- Attention Problems
 - ADHD
 - Anxiety
 - Language processing problems
 - Hearing loss
- Obsessive/Compulsive Behaviors
 - Simple (child wants same chair)
 - Increased restlessness and worry may lead the child or adult to behave in a very rigid manner
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - Seen in 5-7% of children with Down
 - Dx made later (6-8yrs old)