

# Facts about Down Syndrome for New and Expectant Parents

## What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is genetic but does not run in families. People with Down syndrome have different abilities, traits, and health problems. These cannot be fully known before they are born. Causes:

- It is usually caused by an extra copy of the 21<sup>st</sup> chromosome
- It is not caused by anything a parent did or did not do
- As a woman gets older, she has a higher chance of having a baby with Down syndrome

## How common is Down syndrome?

About 250,000 people in the U.S. have Down syndrome. 1 in 800 babies are born with it.

## What is a child with Down syndrome like?

A child with Down syndrome is more like other children than different. But in general, they will take more time to raise than other children and:

- Have learning problems (usually not severe).
- Develop slowly. Physical, occupational, and speech therapy early in life can help them stay on track.
- Have hypotonia (low muscle tone) from birth. This gets better with time and physical therapy.
- Are more likely to have a problem with:
  - Feeding and digestion
  - Hearing
  - Sight

## What is the health of people with Down syndrome?

People with Down syndrome have better health than in the past. They usually live for 60 years. This is from progress in health care, education, and public attitudes.

Half of them have health problems:

- About 5 out of 10 have a heart condition
- About 1 out of 10 have a stomach problem that might need surgery
- Some have lung infections

## What is education like for a child with Down syndrome?

There are programs that help them reach their full abilities:

- Individualized education program (IEP)
- Special education (learning in a small group or the regular classroom)
- More than 250 college programs for people with a learning disability

## What is adult life like for a person with Down Syndrome?

Many are thriving, with active lives. Research finds that most are happy with their lives. This is because the public now values them as members of the community. People with Down syndrome can:

- Be in sports
- Take part in school and social activities
- Have a job
- Live on their own or in a group home
- Have friends and close relationships

## Need support?

A genetic counselor can help (find one at [nsgc.org](http://nsgc.org)). They can provide info on:

- Prenatal (before birth) screening tests
- Your choices (keep the baby, adoption, or abortion)
- Your chance of having another baby with Down syndrome
- Genetics of Down syndrome
- Connecting with local resources (support groups or other Down syndrome families)



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Down Syndrome  
**Readability Assessment**

*Readability tools used:*

Fry-based Grade Level

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

SMOG Grade Level

**PLAIN LANGUAGE Grade Level Range: 5th-9th (Mean 7.1)**