



*This brochure was produced for use by a state health clinic to educate parents and caregivers, as waiting room material, and to be distributed during specific Down Syndrome and Special Needs Awareness events.*

*[Inside copy]*

### **What is Down Syndrome?**

Down Syndrome is, strictly speaking, a genetic birth defect caused by an extra chromosome 21 (Medicine.net) whose cause remains unknown. One in every 733 babies is born with this condition (National Down Syndrome Society).

### **Characteristics of Down Syndrome**

*Characteristics of Down Syndrome are specific to each child. Your child may or may not have any of the following*

(Health News Flash, 2002):

- Poor muscle tone
- Slanting eyes with folds of skin at the inner corners (epicanthic fold)
- Hyperflexibility
- Short, broad hands with only a single crease across the palm
- Broad feet with short toes
- Flat bridge of the nose
- Short, low-set ears
- Short neck
- Physically small head
- Small oral cavity
- Short, high-pitched cries in infancy
- Slowed mental or physical development
- Respiratory or vision problems

### **Possibilities**

Down Syndrome today is much different from what it meant even 20 years ago.

*Erika Lovley of Politico.com highlights Vivian Alonso, a Down Syndrome patient working as an intern on Capital Hill.*

“People with Down Syndrome attend school, work, participate in decisions that affect them, and contribute to society in many wonderful ways” (NDSS, 2010).

You can help improve the quality of your child’s life by enrolling him or her in quality educational programs, providing them with a stimulating home environment, ensuring they receive good health care, and surrounding them with people who will give them positive support and guidance when needed.

*Medical advances have made significant strides in the treatment of Down Syndrome. Life expectancy has been raised from 25 to 60 and scientists are hopeful they will be able to improve, correct, or prevent numerous Down Syndrome symptoms in the future.*

### **Medical concerns**

There are a number of common issues experienced by people with Down Syndrome. For that reason, you should get regular screening for:

- Heart defects
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Respiratory health
- Tendency toward obesity
- Digestive tract health
- Upper neck spinal structure

### **Intellectual development**

The most limiting element of Down Syndrome for patients is a tendency for slow intellectual development or even impairment. There are a number of things you can do to help your child in this area:

People with Down Syndrome tend to be visual learners. Show and say approaches to reading can help your child keep up with her class.

Short attention spans are also common. Teach your child in short periods using concrete, real-world examples as often as possible to encourage more hands-on engagement. (Watson, 2010)

*[External copy - inside flap, back, front]*

### **“Your child has Down Syndrome”**

It is perhaps the most frightening words you’ve ever heard. You suspected something was wrong, but what do you do now that you know it can’t be ‘fixed’?

Down Syndrome doesn’t mean the end of happiness or a normal life for you or your child, though it may require a little more effort and some adjustments in your expectations. Your child may yet exceed all of your hopes and dreams, but she or he will need more of your guidance and a supportive environment. Being informed is the best way to help your child reach his or her full potential..

“Because of the range of ability in children with Down syndrome, it is important for families and all members of the school’s education team to place few limitations on potential capabilities ... Improved public acceptance of persons with disabilities along with increased opportunities for adults with disabilities to live and work independently in the community, have expanded goals for individuals with Down syndrome”  
(Health News Flash, 2002)

### **Resources**

“Down Syndrome Facts and Information.” Health News Flash. (2002).  
[http://www.healthnewsflash.com/conditions/down\\_syndrome.php](http://www.healthnewsflash.com/conditions/down_syndrome.php)

“Down Syndrome: For Parents.” KidsHealth. (2010).  
[http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/genetic/down\\_syndrome.html#](http://kidshealth.org/parent/medical/genetic/down_syndrome.html#)

National Down Syndrome Society. (2010). <http://www.ndss.org/index.php>

### **References**

“Definition of Down Syndrome.” MedicineNet.com. (2010).  
<http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=3112>

Lovley, Erika. “Disabled get job training on Capitol Hill.” Politico.com (2010).  
[http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0410/36448\\_Page2.html#ixzz0mQ7snoKD](http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0410/36448_Page2.html#ixzz0mQ7snoKD)

Watson, Sue. “Teaching Down Syndrome Students.” About.com (2010).  
<http://special.ed.about.com/od/disabilities/a/downs.htm>

# **Down Syndrome**



## **Information for Parents and Caregivers**

