



October is Down Syndrome Awareness Month

- Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring chromosomal condition. One in every 691 babies is born with Down syndrome.
- There are more than 250,000 people living with Down syndrome in the United States.
- Down syndrome affects people of all races economic levels.
- Down syndrome occurs when an individual has three, rather than two, copies of the 21st chromosome. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome.
- A few common physical traits of Down syndrome are low muscle tone, small stature, an upward slant to the eyes, and a single deep crease across the center of the palm. Every person with Down syndrome is a unique individual and may possess these characteristics to different degrees or not at all.
- All people with Down syndrome experience cognitive delays, but the effect is usually mild to moderate and is not indicative of the many strengths and talents that each individual possesses.
- People with Down syndrome attend school, work; participate in decisions that affect them, and contribute to society in many ways.
- Life expectancy for people with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent decades - from 25 in 1983 to 60 today.
- The incidence of births of children with Down syndrome increases with the age of the mother. But due to higher fertility rates in younger women, 80% of children with Down syndrome are born to women under 35 years of age.
- People with Down syndrome have an increased risk for certain medical conditions such as congenital heart defects, respiratory and hearing problems, Alzheimer's disease, childhood leukemia, and thyroid conditions. Many of these conditions are now treatable, so most people with Down syndrome lead healthy lives.
- People with Down syndrome should always be referred to as people first. Instead of "a Down syndrome child," it should be "a child with Down syndrome." Also avoid "Down's child" and describing the condition as "Down's," as in, "He has Down's."
- Down syndrome is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease. You are born with and will have it throughout your life. People "have" Down syndrome, they do not "suffer from" it and are not "afflicted by" it.
- While Down syndrome is listed in many dictionaries with both popular spellings, Down or Down's, (with or without an apostrophe s), the preferred usage in the United States is **Down syndrome**. This is because an "apostrophe s" connotes ownership or possession. Down syndrome is named for the English physician John Langdon Down, who characterized the condition, but did not have it. The *Associated Press Stylebook* recommends using "Down syndrome" as well.
- Researchers are making great strides in identifying the genes on Chromosome 21 that cause the characteristics of Down syndrome. Many feel strongly that it will be possible to improve, correct or prevent many of the problems associated with Down syndrome in the future.
- Quality educational programs, a stimulating home environment, good health care, and positive support from family, friends and the community enable people with Down syndrome to develop their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

