

Down Syndrome

December 25, 2008

Down Syndrome is a **genetic condition caused by extra genetic material (genes) from the 21st chromosome**. Individuals with Down Syndrome also have all the other genes given to them by their parents. As a result, they have a combination of features typical of Down Syndrome on top of the individual features from their parents. Some of the physical traits that are common but not always present are epicanthal folds over the eyes, flattened bridge of the nose, a single palmar crease and decreased muscle tone.

All people with Down syndrome experience **mild to moderate cognitive delays** though they are not indicative of the many strengths and talents that each individual possesses. Additionally, some people with Down syndrome have **low muscle tone** and other physical characteristics associated with Down syndrome that will likely affect how soon a child with Down syndrome will be able to sit up, walk, and speak.



Down syndrome occurs in one out of every 733 live births, affecting people of all ages, races and economic levels. Today, individuals with Down syndrome are active participants in the educational, vocational, social and recreational aspects of our communities. For example, more teens and adults with Down syndrome each year are graduating from high school, going to college, finding employment and living independently.

Children with Down Syndrome may have more frequent **temper tantrums**. Temper tantrums are common to all children, but because children with Down Syndrome often have communication difficulties, temper outbursts can be more frequent. Another concern of parents is **wandering off** - not because they're angry or running away, but rather, they simply like to explore the neighborhood.

Congenital heart defects, increased susceptibility to infection, respiratory problems, obstructed digestive tracts and childhood leukemia occur with greater frequency among children who have Down syndrome, while adults with Down syndrome are at increased risk for Alzheimer's Disease. While there is an **increased risk for certain medical conditions** compared to the general population, advances in medicine have rendered most of these treatable.

Expert in Down Syndrome? DSES is always looking for volunteers to help teach or give presentations!!

Resources and Additional Information

National Down Syndrome Society; www.ndss.org