



# Myths & Truths About Down Syndrome

**Myth: Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder.**

**Truth:** Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 800 births is a child with Down syndrome. There are currently 250,000 people in the U.S. with Down syndrome, with 5,000 births per year.

**Myth: Most children with Down syndrome are born to older parents.**

**Truth:** Eighty percent of children born with Down syndrome are born to women younger than age 35 due to higher fertility rates. However, research has shown a link between the incidence of Down syndrome and maternal age.

**Myth: Down syndrome is hereditary and runs in families.**

**Truth:** Most cases of Down syndrome are sporadic, chance events. In general, Down syndrome does not run in families and a sibling or aunt has no greater chance of conceiving a child with Down syndrome.

**Myth: People with Down syndrome have severe cognitive delays.**

**Truth:** Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate. IQ is not an adequate measure of the functional status of people with Down syndrome. People with Down syndrome have great potential if given opportunities.

**Myth: The life expectancy of people with Down syndrome is 30.**

**Truth:** Thanks to advances in medical and clinical treatment and opportunities to thrive, as many as 80 percent of adults with Down syndrome reach age 55, and many live longer.

**Myth: Behavior problems and depression are just part of having Down syndrome.**

**Truth:** Often, medical or mental health problems go untreated due to the assumption that it is typical of having this genetic condition. Complete examinations by appropriate health care professionals should always be pursued.

**Myth: Children with Down syndrome are placed in segregated special education programs.**

**Truth:** Children with Down syndrome are included in regular academic classrooms across the country. Students may be integrated into specific courses or fully included in the regular classroom for all subjects.

**Myth: Adults with Down syndrome may be unable to work.**

**Truth:** Businesses seek young adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are employed by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry. People with Down syndrome bring to their jobs enthusiasm, reliability and dedication.

# Questions About Down Syndrome (Ds) That Kids May Ask

## **Why do people have Down syndrome?**

Our bodies are made up of cells and every cell has 46 chromosomes. People with Ds have an extra chromosome.

## **Can I catch Down syndrome?**

No. If you weren't born with it you will never get it. You can't catch Ds from someone.

## **Is there a cure for Down syndrome?**

No. There is no medicine to make Ds go away. They will have it for the rest of their lives.

## **Why do individuals with Down syndrome seem to get tired quicker than other kids?**

All the muscles in their body are very soft and have to work extra hard to do the things we can do so easily. This extra work can make a person with Down syndrome very tired.

## **What should I do if I can't understand what they are saying?**

Ask them to repeat what they said, say it again slower, ask them to show you what they are wanting, or you can ask the teacher or adult to help you understand each other. It really helps if you take time to communicate with our friends with Down syndrome.

## **Why do students with Down syndrome leave the classroom with other teachers?**

Students with Down syndrome work with some teachers to get extra practice with their speech and handwriting. They spend time with other teachers and therapists to help them understand more about what you are learning in class. They want to be sure they understand everything you do.

## **What should I do if they stand too close to me or is touching me when I don't want to be touched?**

They need to learn how to be a good friend. Sometimes people with Down syndrome struggle to stand in line or get too close to people. If they do this to you, please ask them to stop and remind them that you need your space too.

## **Why does it hurt their feelings when people call them names?**

Individuals with Down syndrome have feelings just like you. It makes them sad when people make fun of them or ignore them. They didn't do anything wrong to get Down syndrome and they don't like to feel different from other kids. That's why individuals with Down syndrome work so hard to do everything you can do.