My Child and Down Syndrome

Down syndrome, the most commonly occurring condition takes place when an individual has a full or partial extra copy of chromosome 21.

This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome. A few of the 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 – although each person with Down syndrome is a unique individual and may possess these characteristics to different degrees, or not at all.

How Can I Prepare?

- Educate yourself
- Connect with other parents or support groups
- Create an environment that suits your child’s needs and abilities

"Liliana reminds me not to take myself too seriously. She is a hilarious and tenacious toddler that makes me laugh out loud every day. Her extra chromosome compels me to be an engaged citizen that advocates for an inclusive world that recognizes the gifts she has to offer. Being Liliana’s dad has allowed me to grow as a more patient, empathetic and mindful person."

– Robbie McLuckie

My Child and Me

There are many misconceptions regarding children with Down syndrome. The diagnosis of Down syndrome does not prevent your child from participating in regular activities, as some may believe.

Frequently Asked Questions from Fathers

What will my child be like?

Children and adults with Down syndrome will experience life like every other child. He or she will achieve typical milestones such as going to school, participating sports and experiencing happiness.

What medical conditions come along?

There will be challenges in raising your child, but there will also be many joys. Newborns with Down syndrome are at a higher risk for congenital heart defects, hearing and vision loss, respiratory problems and other health conditions. While many children with or without Down syndrome will experience health conditions it is important to do routine screenings with your physician. Keep in mind, your child may not experience any of these conditions.
Frequently Asked Questions from Fathers (continued)

How can I help my other children to understand?
When explaining to your children Down syndrome, tailor your explanation to fit their age and ability to understand with excitement. Be sure to keep family routines and traditions going.

Will my child attend school?
Majority of children with Down syndrome are included in regular education classrooms alongside their friends. Research has shown that inclusion has positive effects on the academic and social experiences on individuals with Down syndrome. Many individuals with Down syndrome also graduate from high school and go on to college.

Will my child play sports?
Children with Down syndrome are encouraged often by doctors and therapists to participate in physical activity or sports at a young age to help build muscle tone which is normally lower in children with Down syndrome. Activities like organized sports, sports teams and special Olympics are great ways for you and your child to get involved.

Will my child one day be employed?
There are businesses that seek and employ individuals with Down syndrome. Many individuals strive to head their own businesses, such as, Blake’s Snow Shack and John’s Crazy Socks.

Will my child ever experience love and happiness?
Down syndrome diagnoses does not limit individuals from experiencing feelings or emotions. People with Down syndrome will live a life of aspirations and emotions just like everyone else does.

Will my child get married?
People with Down syndrome can and will experience meaningful and impactful relationships, friendships and marry.

From One Father to Another

• Love your child no matter the condition
• Don't underestimate your child's potential
• Your child will develop at his/her own speed
• Connect with other parents with children with Down syndrome
• Seek support from family members
• Be your child’s biggest advocate
How Do I Get Involved?

The National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS) has more than 375 local affiliates that provide an array of benefits to help better service the Down syndrome community and their families in their local area. We view our local affiliates as equal partners working on behalf of individuals with Down syndrome, their families and the professionals involved with their overall welfare.

Some affiliates are large operations and some are small neighborhood groups. Although they perform a variety of services, nearly all have a parent support component. Affiliate services and programs may include: new parent support and education, family meetings, sibling and grandparent support, recreational activities, lending libraries, helplines, regional conferences, partnerships with Down Syndrome Clinics, training for medical professionals and educators, Advocacy and Buddy Walks. Find a support group in your area at https://www.ndss.org/resources/local-support/