

What is Down syndrome?

Down syndrome is a common genetic condition that causes intellectual disability and other physical, developmental and learning challenges. Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder. According to Down Syndrome Australia, approximately 1 in every 700- 900 babies born worldwide will have Down syndrome. This chromosomal anomaly occurs at conception and the cause is unknown.

Down syndrome occurs as a result of an extra chromosome. Each of us has 23 pairs of chromosomes in our cells. People with Down syndrome have an extra chromosome (chromosome 21) and therefore have 47 chromosomes instead of 46.

All children with Down syndrome have some degree of:

- ❖ Intellectual disability: Down syndrome is the most common cause of intellectual disability
- ❖ Developmental delay : most children will meet their developmental milestones in the same order as their peers, however the age they reach these milestones may be delayed
- ❖ Characteristic physical features: While children with Down syndrome will resemble others in their family more than they resemble others with Down syndrome, there are some characteristic physical features such as body size, muscle tone, shape of eyes.



Children with Down Syndrome may also experience:

- ❖ Health concerns: this can be associated with lowered general immunity or other more serious medical conditions (including congenital heart defects, gastrointestinal issues, thyroid conditions).
- ❖ Speech difficulties: this can be due to anatomical differences in mouth/jaw; speech motor difficulties, decreased verbal short term memory

Children with Down Syndrome often have better receptive language than expressive language, this means they can often understand more than they can tell us.

(Down Syndrome Australia)

The most important influence on a child's early development is daily interaction and activities within the family environment. Individualised early intervention programs can also support children and families to access opportunities and to achieve their potential.

For further information:

<http://www.directory.byronearlyintervention.org.au/>

<http://www.downsyndrome.org.au>

http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/special_needs/special_needs.html



Shaping Outcomes

early childhood intervention service

> because we can