

Condition:



Downs Syndrome

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What is Downs Syndrome?

Downs syndrome is a genetic condition caused by an extra chromosome in your cells. It cannot be inherited, it occurs by chance at the same time of conception. Downs syndrome causes some level of learning disability and physical characteristics too.

There are some health problems which can occur with Downs's syndrome such as heart problems, difficulty with vision and hearing, but these do not affect everyone with the condition.

Downs Syndrome and work

It might feel daunting for you at first but it is key to remember the benefits of employment alongside of your downs syndrome.

The benefits of working include:

- Increase your independence.
- Enhance development skills.
- Gain new skills associated to adult social life.
- To gain a wider friends cycle.
- To gain more confidence.

Work fit via the Down's Syndrome Association can help you find and explore meaningful employment opportunities. This will ensure that the right job is found which fits your personal requirements, needs and offers progression via training too.

Top tips to help in the workplace

- **Make sure you have a full induction to your role.** This may require some adjustments to match your learning style – ask for a workplace buddy. Get a map of the work space, with photos of who works where, where items are stored, and where things can be found.
- **Keep a written / pictorial copy of all instructions.** This allows you to check back if you are unsure.
- **Understand your abilities.** Be clear with employers about what you can do as this help challenge and prejudices or misunderstandings.
- **Ask for support and adjustments when you need them.** It is your rights to ask where you fell this would be helpful – be clear and concise on what you need.
- **Make to-do lists and prioritise workloads.** Good time management will allow you to schedule enough time to complete each task without feeling under pressure or stressed.
- **Be realistic about what you can achieve.** Don't over commit or offer to take on additional work if you don't have enough time and don't be afraid to tell your line manager that you have too much on. They may not know how you are feeling.
- **Ask for help.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, ask a colleague or manager for help.
- **Take regular breaks away from your desk.** A walk around the block or a few minutes of deep breathing which can help clear your head.

- **Take advantage of employer resources and benefits.** Your workplace may offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which can offer free confidential counselling or other support. Find out what's available to you. Also ensure you get the time off for any medical appointments.
- **Plan your annual leave.** Plan your time off in advance. A proper break will help you catch up on sleep, spend quality time with your friends of family, and you will return feeling more prepared and rested.

How will I know I have Downs Syndrome?

Down's Syndrome is normally diagnosed soon after birth so you have probably grown up knowing you have it.

Physical

- Eyes that slant upwards and outwards, with narrow eye openings
- A small head compared to your body size
- Board feet with short toes
- Ears that are small and low
- Flattened facile profile
- Short arms and legs
- Small nose and mouth
- Decreased/poor muscle tone
- Ability to extend body joints

Mental health

- Anxiety
- OCD
- Sleep difficulties
- Autism
- Depression

Medical

- Loss of hearing
- Heart defects
- Cataracts
- Hip problems
- Dementia
- Obesity
- Low thyroid function

What causes Downs Syndrome?

Genetics are the cause of Downs's syndrome.

Speaking to your GP or a health professional about Downs Syndrome

For additional support it is important that you speak with your GP or social care professional such as an occupational therapist or social worker. If you need support to do this take someone with you or create your own health plan to share with medical professionals

Your GP will be able to prescribe medication to help with symptoms you might be experiencing as well as offer other support too.

Treatments for Downs Syndrome

Treatment is based on your physical and intellectual needs.

Treatment therapies

- **Physical therapy** – these might include exercises and activities that help build on your muscle strength and improve your posture/balance.
- **Speech – language therapy** – this can help you improve your communication skills and use of language effectively.
- **Occupational therapist** – this will help find ways for you to adjust everyday tasks and conditions to match your needs and abilities too.
- **Emotional and behavioural therapies** – these are beneficial to help with all your behaviour patterns.

Social care

This can be support with helping you wash, eat, household tasks, travelling, living in your own home, developing friendships and taking part in leisure activities.

Managing Downs Syndrome

Focus on the positives – always think about the things that you can do rather than the things that you can't do.

Peruse your unique interests, talents and strengths in these areas.



Connect

This can be in any form, talk to someone, speak to someone new, ask how someone's weekend was or put aside 5 minutes of your day to find out how someone really is, find social activities you enjoy. This can then in turn help with developing on positive social relationships.



Be active

Regular physical activity can help with lowers rates of anxiety for you and improve your weight management. Fun recreational social activities can provide the benefits of exercise without feeling too much like hard work. Building regular family walks with friends into the week can really help. Social activities such as dancing or drama groups can be really good motivators.



Take notice

Take time to understand your surroundings.



Keep Learning

This will help you to stay motivated and build on your skills. Plus it enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.



Give

Taking part in social and community life can help keep you engaged and active.



Healthy eating

Weight management can be an issue so make sure you have a balanced diet.



Self-talk

This can be helpful for you and is a good self-soothing strategy too. But also keep an eye on this as this might be a sign for you that you are becoming unwell too.



Attend support groups

Useful links

