



*Down syndrome is  
a condition not a  
disease.*

## Facts about Down syndrome

- Down syndrome is one of the most common genetic birth conditions.
- Approximately 60 babies are born with Down syndrome in Victoria each year.
- This means that about 100,000 babies are born with Down syndrome around the world every year.
- Babies with Down syndrome are born to parents of every age, social class and race.
- Although the incidence of babies born with Down syndrome increases with the age of the mother, most babies with Down syndrome are born to mothers under 30.
- Down syndrome is the result of an extra chromosome 21 in every cell.
- Despite recent advances in genetic research, the cause of the extra chromosome is still unknown.
- Nothing done before or during pregnancy causes a baby to have Down syndrome.
- In countries with developed healthcare provisions the average life expectancy of someone with Down syndrome is beyond 60 years.
- Children with Down syndrome have an element of intellectual disability. However it is no more possible to give a precise statement about the future potential of a child with Down syndrome than it is to give such a statement for any other child.
- The intellectual and physical abilities and the range of achievement for people with Down syndrome vary with each individual as it does with any other person.
- People don't suffer from Down syndrome. Down syndrome is a condition not a disease, there is no pain or distress involved, although some may have other associated medical problems.
- A syndrome is a collection of characteristics, or features that occur together and characterise a particular condition.
- Down is the surname of the English physician who, in 1866, first categorised the particular group of symptoms and characteristics belonging to the one syndrome. Hence the condition became known as Down syndrome.

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