



Down  
Syndrome  
Ireland

National Leadership Local Support

## Primary School Student Information



# What is Down syndrome?



# What is a syndrome?

- A syndrome is the name given to a collection of different things grouped together in your body
- Down syndrome is not an illness
- It is not a disease

# What is Down syndrome?

- Down syndrome is something you are born with
- Nobody knows why it happens
- One in every 700 babies across world is born with Down syndrome
- Down syndrome is called after Doctor John Langdon Down



# What is Down syndrome?

- Our bodies are made up of lots of tiny cells
- Chromosomes are tiny parts of the cells in our bodies
- Chromosomes tell your body how to grow
- We all have 46 Chromosomes in each cell, half from our Mother and half from our Father
- A baby born with Down syndrome has one extra Chromosome – they have 47 instead of 46

# What is Down syndrome?

- All children with Down syndrome look a bit alike but they also look like their families
- All children with Down syndrome have some difficulty learning
- They may need extra help, which they get from their families, their teachers and their friends



# What is Down syndrome?

- They may be slow to learn to talk, walk and play
- They may need extra help with school work and solving problems

Remember!

We all need extra help to do things sometimes.



# What is Down syndrome?

- Sometimes children with Down syndrome might have lots of coughs, colds or other illnesses so they might have to see a doctor a little more than other people
- They might have difficulty with their eyes and ears – they might need to wear glasses or have help to hear properly





# What is Down syndrome?

- Sometimes a person with Down syndrome may have difficulty speaking clearly
- Sign language is when people use their hands to communicate
- In Ireland, many people with Down syndrome use Lámh signs
- Some people with Down syndrome use pictures to communicate

# Things you notice about people who have Down syndrome

- Eyes are sometimes shaped like almonds
- Nose can be flat and small
- Ears can be small
- People with Down syndrome can be shorter in height than other family members
- These things can be found in many people but are more common in people with Down syndrome

# I'm a Person First

A baby is born with Down syndrome, he/she is not a 'Down syndrome' or a 'Down syndrome person'

Always use person-first language

I am a person with Down syndrome, I am a person first and foremost



# What do we need to do?



# What do we need to do?

- Accept the child with Down syndrome for who they are
- Do fun things together
- Talk to the child with Down syndrome about the things that you do and the things you like
- Sometimes people might say things about a child with Down syndrome that might upset you
- If this happens, tell your teacher or another adult at your school

# What do we need to do?

- All children might not understand what it means to have Down syndrome
- This may lead them to tease or make fun of the child with Down syndrome
- Try to tell them about Down syndrome. You can ask your teacher to help you explain it to them

# What do we need to do?

- We can be playmates to share fun activities
- We can help each other to share and co-operate
- We can help each other to cope with disappointment or hostility
- We can share our worries and our hopes





# Remember I'm a Person First

Always use person-first language

“I am a person with Down syndrome, I am a person first and foremost.”



**A person with  
Down syndrome  
is a person first  
and is just like  
you.  
They have the  
same hopes,  
needs and  
feelings.**





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