

## NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME DAY

Tuesday, 20 October marks National Down Syndrome Day, designated by our late President Mr Nelson Mandela to create awareness about Down Syndrome.

Down Syndrome is the most common and naturally occurring chromosomal genetic condition and is the largest single cause of intellectual disabilities in South Africa.



### What are the fact about Down syndrome?

- People with Down syndrome have mild to moderate mental damage.
- The cause of Down syndrome is not related to age, race, religion or socio-economic situations.
- One in 1 000 babies born in developed countries and 1 in 650 babies born in developing countries is affected by down syndrome.
- 80 percent of children affected by Down syndrome are born from mothers under the age of 35, although women over the age of 35 are at a higher risk of having a child with Down syndrome.
- Although Down syndrome cannot be cured, there is a variety of medical care to treat problems associated with the disease.
- Children with Down syndrome can be included in normal schools with regular academic procedures.

People with Down syndrome can live up to the age of 50 to 55.

## COVID-19 RESEARCH FINDINGS



*Researchers summarized findings:*

*“Based on our data and previous findings, we conclude that patients with DS are not only more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19, but also that their comorbid conditions, including diabetes, in particular, are important drivers.”*

## Are You at Risk of Having a Baby With Down Syndrome?

Doctors understand the chromosomal abnormalities behind Down syndrome, but they still can't pinpoint exactly why it occurs. Here's what experts know about a baby's chances of having Down Syndrome.

Characterised by an array of physical and intellectual symptoms, Down Syndrome affects one in 700 babies today, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and though researchers have pinpointed the chromosomal abnormalities that cause Down syndrome, they still don't know much about why it happens.

## Causes of Down Syndrome

To understand your baby's chances of Down Syndrome, it helps to know what causes the condition in the first place. Most people are born with 46 chromosomes (clusters of genes) in the nucleus of every cell. The chromosomes form in pairs with 23 from the mother and 23 from the father. Down syndrome happens when a baby is conceived with a full or partial extra copy of one of these chromosomes—specifically chromosome 21.

## Three types of Down Syndrome

- **Trisomy 21:** Most people have two copies of chromosome 21 in each cell, but those with trisomy 21 have three copies. About 95 percent of Down syndrome cases are trisomy 21.
- **Mosaic Down Syndrome:** While some cells have two copies of chromosome 21 like usual, others have an additional third copy.
- **Translocation Down syndrome:** There are two full copies of chromosome 21 in the cell, as well as a partial extra chromosome 21 stuck to an entirely different chromosome.

## What Factors Affect Your Chances of Down Syndrome?

Although Down Syndrome is a genetic condition, you most likely will not have any family history of it. "In most cases, the extra chromosome seems to happen by chance," says Emily Jean Davidson, M.D., clinical director of the Down Syndrome Program at Boston Children's Hospital. That said, some factors might increase your chances of having a baby with Down Syndrome.

### Here's what to know about them.

- **Maternal Age:** Down syndrome can occur at any maternal age, but the possibility increases as a woman gets older.
- **Maternal Folate Metabolization:** "There have been theories about whether it's due to how well the mother metabolises folate, but there are just as many studies saying no as studies saying yes.
- **Genetics:** Translocation Down Syndrome is passed from parent to child in one-third of cases.
- **History:** If you have one child with Down syndrome, your chance of having a second child with the condition is about 1 percent.





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<https://www.gov.za/speeches/national-down-syndrome-day-2019-18-dec-2018-0956//www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-08-2020-world-mental-health-day-an-opportunity-to-kick-start-a-massive-scale-up-in-investment-in-mental-health>

<https://www.parents.com/health/down-syndrome/are-you-at-risk-of-having-a-baby-with-down-syndrome/>

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20200603/How-COVID-19-affects-people-with-Down-Syndrome.aspx>

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