

# Caring for a child with Down syndrome

## Down syndrome (DS)

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by trisomy 21. chromosome.

### External defects

Facial defects include epicanthus, wide root of the nose, mongoloid eye shape, wide tongue, wide neck. Those affected by this disease tend to have monkey furrows on their hands, and sandal gaps between the toes on their feet.

### Internal defects

Mental retardation is of varying severity in individuals with DS, it can be moderate to severe.

Health complications in DS are diverse, it involves the involvement of the cardiovascular, endocrinological and gastrointestinal systems. Furthermore, sensory impairments of both sight and hearing are also common.

The development of a person with DS proceeds normally to a certain extent, but his process is more lengthy and slower.

 For more information see *Down syndrome*.

## Care of children with DS

### Early care

In general, the earlier the better. Early care, preferably by one's own parents, has a positive effect on the individual's psyche and later inclusion in society, both on social development (finding friends) and on the burden of mental retardation (his IQ can improve). It is important to use a child's natural potential from birth and toddlerhood.

### Children's behavior

**Active M. Down** – restless, unfocused, climbs everywhere he can, often runs out of sight. Here it is necessary to find a certain release of energy for the child in something that he enjoys and can keep up with, for example some sport, often swimming. Motivation is also important, to punish appropriately. These children do not tolerate stress, well, the more stressed they are, the harder it is for them to learn certain principles. Dealing with patience and love has much more success!

**Passive M. Down** – the exact opposite of active. Motivation is also important here, but the opposite to active children. Such conditions must be created for them, which will make them happy to move.

Children with DS tend to have problems with fine motor skills, again important motivation and reward in the form of praise or even applause for work done correctly, in children often when playing or painting.

Speech disorders - usually associated with a large tongue, it is necessary to seek professional speech therapy help, to teach the child to breathe correctly. From simpler sounds (e.g. animal) slowly continue with more complex words. With these procedures, a child can be taught to speak normally by the age of 6.

### Education

Depending on the degree of mental retardation, the child can be integrated into kindergartens at the place of residence, with a more severe degree of mental retardation, there are special facilities specifically for these children. The same applies to elementary or special schools. Again according to IQ, he can (rather exceptionally) attend vocational schools or evening schools for further education after primary school. Graduates of these schools are successfully entering the workforce.

### Health care

It is not possible to cure DS, only accompanying diseases can be treated. Parents or guardians have to attend various check-ups and examinations with their children from birth. Ultrasound examination of the heart, endocrinological examination, GIT examination. Regular hearing and vision examinations are also necessary,



A baby with down syndrome

children often suffer from myopia and squint. ORT (Orofacial Regulation Therapy) - helps to keep the tongue in the mouth. Psychotherapy – necessary due to mental retardation. It is also not out of the question to administer certain food supplements – vitamins, enzymes, fatty acids for better digestion and health support as such.

## Links

## References

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