

What is Down Syndrome?

- Down syndrome occurs when an individual has a full or partial copy of the 21st chromosome. Typically developing individuals have two copies of the 21st chromosome, individuals with Down syndrome have three copies.
 - The cause of the extra or partial chromosome is still unknown.
- Down syndrome is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease or birth defect.
- People with Down syndrome are a part of the Intellectual and Developmental Disability (IDD) community.
- Approximately 1 in 772 babies in the United States are born with Down syndrome.

Use this Language When Referring to Down Syndrome and Individuals who have Down Syndrome

- The Down syndrome community prefers to use "People First Language" when talking about individuals with Down syndrome. People First Language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is.
- Avoid:
 - "a Down syndrome child" or "Down's child". It should be a "child with Down syndrome."
 - describing the condition as "Down's," as in, "He has Down's."
- People "have" Down syndrome, they do not "suffer from" it and are not "afflicted by" it.
- NDSS strongly condemns the use of the word "retarded" in any context. Using this word is hurtful and suggests that people with disabilities are not competent.
- "Typically developing" or "typical" is preferred over "normal" when referring to individuals who do not have a disability.
- NDSS prefers to write out Down syndrome in all instances rather than shortening to DS.
- Choose language that emphasizes a person's abilities, not their disabilities. NDSS discourages the use of functioning labels such as "high functioning" or "low functioning".

Down vs. Down's

- NDSS uses the preferred spelling, Down syndrome, rather than Down's syndrome which is often used in other parts of the world.
- Down syndrome is named for English physician John Langdon Down, who characterized the condition, but did not have it. An "apostrophe s" connotes ownership or possession.

For more information, visit www.ndss.org