

MYTHS & TRUTHS DOWN SYNDROME

myths & truths

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Myth: Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder.

Truth: Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 691 babies in the United States is born with Down syndrome, approximately 6,000 births per year. Today, there are more than 400,000 people living with Down syndrome living in the United States.

Myth: People with Down syndrome have severe cognitive delays.

Truth: Most people with Down syndrome have cognitive delays that are mild to moderate. Children with Down syndrome fully participate in public and private educational programs. Educators and researchers are still discovering the full educational potential of people with Down syndrome.

Myth: Most people with Down syndrome are institutionalized.

Truth: Today people with Down syndrome live at home with their families and are active participants in the educational, vocational, social, and recreational activities of the community. They are integrated into the regular education system and take part in sports, camping, music, art programs and all the other activities of their communities. People with Down syndrome are valued members of their families and their communities, contributing to society in a variety of ways.

Myth: Parents will not find community support in bringing up their child with Down syndrome.

Truth: In almost every community of the United States there are parent support groups and other community organizations directly involved in providing services to families of individuals with Down syndrome.

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Myth: Children with Down syndrome must be placed in segregated special education programs.

Truth: Children with Down syndrome have been included in regular academic classrooms in schools across the country. In some instances, they are integrated into specific courses, while in other situations students are fully included in the regular classroom for all subjects. The current trend in education is for full inclusion in the social and educational life of the community. Increasingly, individuals with Down syndrome graduate from high school with regular diplomas, participate in post-secondary academic and college experiences and, in some cases, receive college degrees.

Myth: Adults with Down syndrome are unemployable.

Truth: Businesses are seeking adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are being employed in small- and medium-sized offices: by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry, in clerical positions, childcare, the sports field and in the computer industry to name a few.

Myth: Adults with Down syndrome are unable to form close interpersonal relationships leading to marriage.

Truth: People with Down syndrome have meaningful friendships, date, socialize, form ongoing relationships and marry.

Myth: People with Down syndrome are always happy.

Truth: People with Down syndrome have feelings just like everyone else in the population. They experience the full range of emotions. They respond to positive expressions of friendship and they are hurt and upset by inconsiderate behavior. **Myth:** Individuals with Down syndrome die at a young age. **Fact:** The average life expectancy of an individual with Down syndrome is now 60 years of age. Many live to be 60-70 years of age.