

People with Down syndrome are people who happen to have an extra chromosome, and have the same needs as everyone else, to be accepted, valued and respected.

Talking about Down syndrome

Good Practice Guidelines

We rely on health professionals, teachers and other people in positions of standing to speak about issues relating to Down syndrome in a way that is both factually accurate and inoffensive to the general public, including people with Down syndrome and their families.

Here are guidelines to ensure you are not perpetuating any myths about the condition.

An individual with Down syndrome is an individual first and foremost. The emphasis should be on the person, not the disability.

If there is a requirement to refer to someone having the condition, always use person first language; so 'Jack has Down syndrome', never 'he's a Down's boy'. Please consider if necessary to constantly refer to someone as having Down syndrome. Please look at the person, not their genetic make-up!

Please describe people without disabilities as "typically developing" rather than "normal."

Avoid the use of stereotypes and generalisations, eg "They are" Consider and view each person an individual.

Medical language benchmarks against a medically defined 'norm', much medical terminology is insulting and disrespectful to people with Down syndrome, so we advocate the use of difference instead of abnormality, disorder or anomaly

Do not say	Do say
A Downs baby/person/child	A person/child with Down syndrome or who has Down syndrome
Downs (as an abbreviation)	DS (as an abbreviation if necessary)
Suffers from OR is a victim of Down syndrome	Has Down syndrome
Mentally handicapped/backward/retarded	Learning disability or intellectual disability
Disease/illness/handicap	Condition OR genetic condition
The 'risk' of a baby having Down syndrome (in relation to pre-natal screening)	The 'chance of a baby having Down syndrome

Thank you for joining us in celebrating Down Syndrome Awareness Month!
It's so important we raise awareness and celebrate what makes us each unique.

Further Links

Language Matters Cards

We rely on health professionals, teachers and other people in positions of standing to speak about issues relating to Down syndrome in a way that is both factually accurate and inoffensive to the general public, including people with Down syndrome and their families.

We'd love for you to share our social media graphics with your family, friends and followers by clicking the link below:

Language Matters Cards



Further Links

31 Facts about Down syndrome

Daily social media posts.

31 Facts about Down syndrome graphics

