Myths and Facts About Down Syndrome

**Myth:** Down syndrome is a rare genetic disorder.

**Fact:** Down syndrome is the most commonly occurring genetic condition. One in every 733 children born have Down syndrome, representing 5,000 births per year in the United States alone. Today, more than 400,000 people in the U.S. have Down syndrome.

**Myth:** People with Down syndrome have a short life span.

**Fact:** Life expectancy for individuals with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent years. The average life expectancy approaches that of people without Down syndrome.

**Myth:** Most children with Down syndrome are born to older parents.

**Fact:** Most children with Down syndrome are born to women younger than 35 years old, simply because younger women have more children. However, the probability of giving birth to a child with Down syndrome increases with a mother’s age.

**Myth:** People with Down syndrome are severely “retarded.”

**Fact:** Most people with Down syndrome have an IQ that falls in the mild to moderate range of intellectual disability. 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.

Source: National Down Syndrome Society
**Myth:** Most people with Down syndrome are institutionalized.

**Fact:** Today people with Down syndrome live at home with their families and are active and valued 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.

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**Myth:** Parents will not find community support in raising a child with Down syndrome.

**Fact:** In almost every community of the U.S. 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.

**Fact:** 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 regular classrooms 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.

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**Myth:** Adults with Down syndrome are unemployable.

**Fact:** Businesses are seeking young adults with Down syndrome for a variety of positions. They are being employed in small- and medium-size offices: by banks, corporations, nursing homes, hotels, and restaurants. They work in the music and entertainment industry, in clerical positions, child care, the sports field, and in the computer industry. People with Down syndrome bring to their jobs enthusiasm, reliability, and dedication.

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**Myth:** People with Down syndrome are always happy.

**Fact:** 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.

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

**Fact:** People with Down syndrome date, socialize, form ongoing relationships, and marry.

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**Myth:** Down syndrome can never be cured.

**Fact:** Research on Down syndrome is making great strides in identifying the genes on chromosome 21 that cause Down syndrome. Scientists now feel strongly that it will be possible in the future to improve, correct, or prevent many of the problems associated with Down syndrome. 