

Down Syndrome

Down syndrome (DS) is a genetic disorder in which babies are born with an extra copy of chromosome 21. The extra copy of chromosome 21 changes the typical development of the baby's brain and the body, causing mental and physical challenges.

DS may be detected during pregnancy by screening or diagnostic tests. If not detected before birth, it usually is detectable at birth by the baby's physical characteristics, including:

- Low muscle tone
- A single deep crease across the palm of the hand
- A slightly flattened facial profile, and an upward slant to the eyes

Signs and Symptoms

Additional symptoms that develop into adulthood include:

- Poor language development and language use
- Vision and hearing problems
- Intellectual disability
- Possible misalignment of bones at the base of the head and compression of the spinal cord

HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Although DS continues throughout a person's lifespan, physical therapists can help improve their movement activities and everyday tasks. Physical therapists can also help prevent some of the complications of DS such as developmental delay, obesity, and lower levels of heart or cardiovascular fitness.

Specifically, physical therapists work with children with DS to:

- Improve strength.
- Improve developmental skills.
- Improve balance and coordination.
- Improve physical fitness.



DS affects about 1 in 700 babies, or approximately

6,000 BABIES

born in the United States each year.

Almost

50%

of babies born with DS will have some type of congenital heart disease.