



# Lots of Socks for Down syndrome



**Down syndrome awareness and  
inclusion resource for organisations**

Every person with Down syndrome grows through an inclusive environment – in their community, at work, school and at home.

This resource supports organisations to talk about difference and raise awareness of Down syndrome.

Lots of Socks Day helps people respectfully understand the diversity in their world. The resource aims to help people learn about, accept and celebrate each person's uniqueness.

## **When is World Down Syndrome Day?**

The United Nations General Assembly decided that from 2012, World Down Syndrome Day would be celebrated on the 21st day of the 3rd month, to signify the uniqueness of the triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome which causes Down syndrome. Organisations around the world are invited to observe World Down Syndrome Day in an appropriate way, to raise awareness of Down syndrome.

## **Why Lots of Socks?**

Lots of Socks is a Down Syndrome International campaign to create conversation and bring awareness of Down syndrome on 21 March, World Down Syndrome Day, each year. The idea behind the Lots of Socks initiative is that all types, shapes and sizes of the same thing can be unique in their own way, and yet do the same thing. Everyone understands what socks are, how they look and what they are for, and that no two socks are the same.

Lots of Socks is a campaign to create conversation about diversity, uniqueness, inclusion and acceptance.



# Down syndrome awareness and inclusion resource

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## Objective

This resource aims to raise Down syndrome awareness and support the social and economic inclusion of people with Down syndrome in their community. The goal is that on 21 March, World Down Syndrome Day (or a suitable alternative date), staff are encouraged to:

- wear their choice of socks – they can be bright, colourful, short or long; the choice is endless.
- make a donation to raise funds for their local Down syndrome association or Down Syndrome Australia.



[www.downsyndrome.org.au/get-involved/donate/](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/get-involved/donate/)

- hold a morning tea to celebrate World Down Syndrome Day and have a conversation about diversity and inclusion using the lots of socks theme and resources in this resource.

## Definitions

The definitions and explanations provided are written for primary school children aged five and above.

### Chromosome:

Inside the cells of all living things are microscopic, thread-like parts called chromosomes. They carry hereditary information from one generation to the next in the form of genes. Chromosomes determine traits such as the colour of your hair, the colour of your eyes, or your blood type. Chromosomes carry all the information about what makes you, you.

### Down syndrome:

Down syndrome is a genetic condition – it is not an illness or disease. It occurs because of an extra chromosome.

Our bodies are made up of millions of cells. There are 23 pairs of chromosomes, or 46 chromosomes, in every cell. Down syndrome is caused by the occurrence of an extra chromosome, chromosome 21. (Down syndrome is also known as trisomy 21.) People with Down syndrome then have 47 chromosomes in their cells instead of 46. This results in a range of physical characteristics, health and development indications and some level of intellectual disability. Down syndrome is usually recognisable at birth and confirmed by a blood test. It was named after Dr John Langdon Down who first described it.





Although we know how Down syndrome happens, we do not yet know why it happens. Down syndrome occurs at conception, across all ethnic and social groups and to parents of all ages. It is nobody's fault, there is no cure and it does not go away.

Down syndrome is not new, and cases have been recorded through history. Down syndrome is the most common chromosome difference and one of every 1,158 babies born will have Down syndrome. This number has not changed significantly throughout the time that statistics have been collected.

### **Inclusion:**

The Oxford Dictionary describes inclusion as "the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure; a person that is included within a whole". Inclusion is not just about being physically in the same place as others. We believe inclusion also incorporates belonging to, and to have the feeling of belonging to, a group or community. Research has shown social connection improves physical health, psychological well-being and decreases rates of anxiety and depression. People who feel included and connected have higher self-esteem and self worth, which then creates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical well-being.

# Language

The importance of using the right words cannot be underestimated. Language can influence how people see other people. It is therefore important to always use the correct terms, 'Down syndrome' or 'Trisomy 21'.

## Person first language

Put the person before the disability, i.e. "John\* who has Down syndrome", or "My employee Mary\* with Down syndrome". This shows that the person with Down syndrome is not defined by his or her disability, but by their name. This encourages people to think of the individual first. However, the best approach is to follow the individual's preference on how they wish to be identified.

## Words can create barriers

Words such as 'retarded' or 'handicapped' have negative connotations and should not be used. Words like 'disease', 'illness', 'suffers from', 'afflicted by' all have the ability to conjure up thoughts of a contagious medical condition and should also be avoided.

## Avoid stereotypes

All people are individuals and unique and have their own emotions, and people with Down syndrome are no different. They don't fit into the stereotype of being always happy and loving all the time.


As with typically developing people, people with Down syndrome have varying levels of ability and don't fit into a category of 'mild' or 'severe'. Along with all their other traits and characteristics, they have Down syndrome and their ability is enhanced by quality education and inclusion.





## Preparation and activities

### Resources

- The Socks resources are on the Lots of Socks webpage  
 [www.downsyndrome.org.au/news-events/national-events-filter-by-s-t/lots-of-socks/](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/news-events/national-events-filter-by-s-t/lots-of-socks/)
- They are also on the Resource Hub (search by “Socks” or “Lots of Socks”)

### Tell the staff

A week before the allocated date, send an email to your staff to explain World Down Syndrome Day and what the Lots of Socks exercise is about (Attachment A).

### Plan the activities

On 21 March (or the day just before) plan for the activities you intend to run.

### Discussion about uniqueness and Down syndrome

Facilitate a discussion around diversity and how we are all unique and what Down syndrome is. Attachment B can be used as a guide.

It may be appropriate to show staff a YouTube clip that shows the ability of people with Down syndrome.

 **Video: Living with Down syndrome**



For more suggestions, contact your local Down Syndrome Association, which can be accessed via:

 [www.downsyndrome.org.au](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au)



# Attachment A

An example of an email to promote the day

Dear [staff member]

World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated on 21 March each year.

This year, we will use the Lots of Socks theme created by Down Syndrome International and celebrate World Down Syndrome Day on [insert date] March. On this day, we ask that you wear socks of your choice to work. They can be bright, colourful, short or long, the choice is endless!

During the day, we will be discussing what makes us all unique as well as Down syndrome. We will talk about inclusion and how we can all help each other to feel included.

Please find below a brief definition of Down syndrome as a reference.

*Down syndrome is a genetic condition – it is not an illness or disease. It occurs because of an extra chromosome. Our bodies are made up of millions of cells. There are 23 pairs of chromosomes, or 46 chromosomes, in every cell. Down syndrome is caused by the occurrence of an extra chromosome, chromosome 21. (Down syndrome is also known as trisomy 21.) People with Down syndrome then have 47 chromosomes in their cells instead of 46. This results in a range of physical characteristics, health and development indications and some level of intellectual disability. Down syndrome is usually recognisable at birth and confirmed by a blood test. It was named after Dr John Langdon Down who first described it. Although we know how Down syndrome happens, we do not yet know why it happens. Down syndrome occurs at conception, across all ethnic and social groups and to parents of all ages. It is nobody's fault, there is no cure and it does not go away. People with Down syndrome may find doing some activities more challenging but, just like everyone else, people with Down syndrome will continue to learn, and are good at some things and not others.*

We look forward to celebrating World Down Syndrome Day together.

Kind regards,  
(Facilitator name)

# Attachment B

## Exercise 1 – Discussion about diversity

This exercise is to highlight that we are all unique in how we look, what we like and what we do, but that we are all people, we all have our interests and we all belong to the same community.

Read out a list of questions (examples listed below) and ask people to put their hand up if their answer is yes.

The facilitator then encourages people to look around the room and see who else has answered yes to that same question, “Who else is the same as you?”

Questions can be adjusted to ensure they suit the audience.

- Who has spots/stripes/flowers/pictures on their socks?
- Who is wearing red socks?
- Who has long socks?
- Who speaks more than one language?
- Who has lived in another country?
- Who is left-handed?
- Who plays a musical instrument?
- Who knows sign language?
- Who enjoys playing a sport?

**Discuss the fact that although some people have the same interests/likes/dislikes at the same time we are all unique. Regardless of our individual characteristics, we all have similarities and differences.**

- Discuss the fact that some people who had the same colour socks were interested in different things/have different likes.
- Engage in a discussion around what inclusion means in the work environment. An inclusive workplace is where all employees feel valued and are part of the workplace community. It is not just about being the same as everyone else. It means having a voice and being actively included in workplace goals, actions and decision-making.





## Exercise 2

This exercise is to help people understand that there are many things to learn about each of us.

In groups of 2–4 complete a group discussion. People are asked to learn 1–4 new things about each other and report back.

## Exercise 3

This exercise is to learn specifically about Down syndrome. Remember to model your words around person first language.

### Example discussion could go as follows:

21 March is World Down Syndrome Day and we are celebrating this because we have Mary\* in our workplace. Mary is a member of our organisation and she was born with Down syndrome.

**Q** Does anyone know what Down syndrome means? (no)

**A** Down syndrome is where a person is born with three copies of chromosome 21 instead of two, which is why Down syndrome is also sometimes known as trisomy 21. Down syndrome occurs at conception. People from all different backgrounds and ages have children with Down syndrome.

People with Down syndrome have likes and dislikes just the same as everyone else.

Every person with Down syndrome is an individual. Just like everyone else, they will have different things they are good at and other things that they find harder.

*\*name chosen as example*

# Contact details

Down Syndrome Australia works with its members and partners to provide support, information and resources to people with Down syndrome and their families. Please contact your local association on the details below for any enquiries, or to contact Down Syndrome Australia directly, email [info@downsyndrome.org.au](mailto:info@downsyndrome.org.au).

You can also visit our website at [www.downsyndrome.org.au](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au) to find more information on Down syndrome and our work.

## National: 1300 881 935

### Victoria

#### Down Syndrome Victoria

T: (03) 9486 9600

Toll Free 1300 658 873

E: [info@dsav.asn.au](mailto:info@dsav.asn.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/vic](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/vic)

### Queensland

#### Down Syndrome & Intellectual Disability Queensland

T: (07) 3356 6655

E: [office@downsyndromeqlld.org.au](mailto:office@downsyndromeqlld.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/qlld](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/qlld)

### South Australia

#### Information Service South Australia (Down Syndrome Australia)

T: 1300 344 954

E: [infoSA@downsyndrome.org.au](mailto:infoSA@downsyndrome.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/sa](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/sa)

### Western Australia

#### Down Syndrome WA

T: (08) 6182 3690

E: [admin@downsyndromewa.org.au](mailto:admin@downsyndromewa.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/wa](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/wa)

### Tasmania

#### Down Syndrome Tasmania Inc.

T: 1300 592 050

E: [info@downsyndrometasmania.org.au](mailto:info@downsyndrometasmania.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/tas](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/tas)

### Australian Capital Territory

#### ACT Down Syndrome & Intellectual Disability Association

T: (02) 6290 0656

E: [admin@actdsa.org.au](mailto:admin@actdsa.org.au)

W: [www.downsyndrome.org.au/act](http://www.downsyndrome.org.au/act)

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## Disclaimer

The information in this resource is general in nature and does not constitute advice. Down Syndrome Australia will not be held responsible for any decisions made as a result of using this information. The contents of the resource do not constitute legal advice and should not be relied on as such.



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