

Communicating with people with Down syndrome

What people with Down syndrome would like health care professionals to know?

- With the right supports people with Down syndrome live normal, happy lives. Research has found that 99% of people with Down syndrome surveyed indicated that they were happy with their lives.
- People with Down syndrome who were surveyed wanted health professionals to know that they have the similar hopes and dreams as their peers.



Down Syndrome
Australia

Communicating with people with Down syndrome

The way people communicate is different for everyone with or without DS. The easiest way to find out how they need you to communicate is to ask them and their family directly.

Some other helpful points are below:

- Use easy to understand language.
- If an acronym is unavoidable, explain it at the beginning
- Talk directly to the person with Down syndrome.
- Build rapport and trust with them. Listen to them as they explain their needs.
- Explain things clearly using balanced language. Try to avoid complex medical terminology.
- Ask questions one at a time and encourage the person to ask questions back.
- Check back with the person to ensure they have understood what has been said.
- If any type of examination is required then check in

with them to see how they are feeling. Explain what you are going to do before going ahead.

- Consider any background noise and whether this is impacting the person's understanding of the consultation.
- Consider having some visual prompts to help the person understand what you are talking about.
- Have patience and don't rush the person with Down syndrome.
- Provide the person with easy read information to take away.

What people with Down syndrome would like health care professionals to know?

- In Australia there is a wonderful community made up of people with Down syndrome and their families. Connection to community is important to everyone.
- Everyone with Down syndrome is different and may have different health concerns. Look at the person first and don't just focus on the Down syndrome.