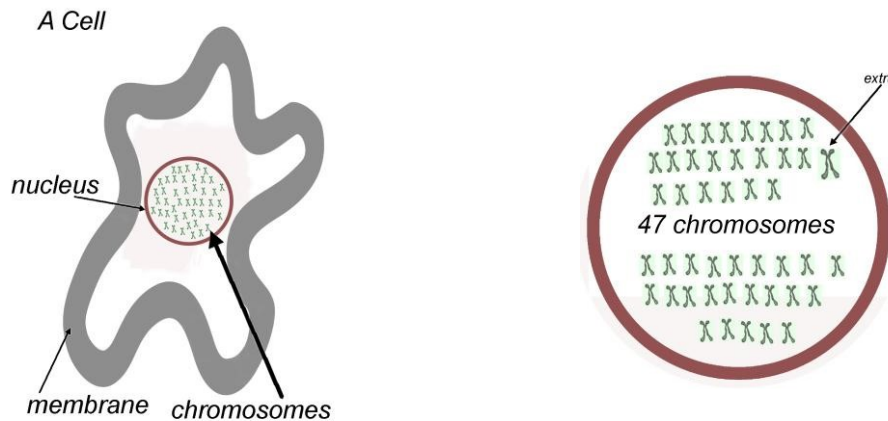


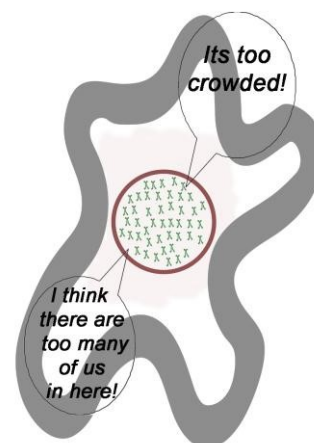
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – PRIMARY

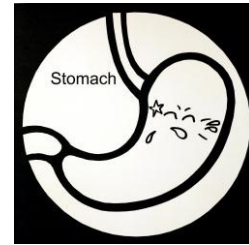
What is Down syndrome?

People have Down syndrome because they have an extra chromosome. Our bodies are made up of millions and millions of cells and each cell usually has 46 chromosomes. Someone with Down syndrome, though, has 47 chromosomes, one extra. This was discovered by Dr Langdon Down, that's why it's called Down (or Down's) syndrome.



Chromosomes are what give you brown hair or blue eyes or even make you a boy or a girl. This extra chromosome in each cell crowds the other chromosomes and makes it harder for each cell to do its job.





So, stomach cells can have a harder time digesting food, muscle cells can have a harder time running and lifting, and brain cells can have a harder time understanding and learning.

Can I get it?

No. Someone who has Down syndrome is born with it, so if you haven't got it now you will never have it.

Is there a cure?

No, there is no cure. A person with Down syndrome has it all their life. They can't get rid of it and they don't grow out of it.

Do some people have it "worse" than others?

Some people are more affected by Down syndrome than others. But we are all different, aren't we? You will know some kids in your class who are really good at sport, or not so good at maths, or who are really into computers, or not so good at reading. It's the same with Down syndrome – someone with DS might be good at skateboarding, but not so good at reading, or be really good at reading but who finds speaking clearly really difficult.



Why does my friend have someone helping them in school?

Having Down syndrome makes the person a different kind of clever. They learn the same things as you and I learn – just maybe a little more slowly. That is why they have someone helping them in school. You can help them with their work too.



How can I help my friend at school?



Your friend will really appreciate you spending time in class with him/her. Sharing a book together, working together on a project, being part of a team or just chatting are really important ways you can include your friend at school. Think about what it is about school that you really enjoy – some of it is the work, but the best bits are being with your friends. It's the same for your friend with DS.

How can I help my friend at playtime?

You can help by just being yourself and by treating your friend with DS just as you would anyone else. People with DS like being around others and tend to copy others' behaviour. So make sure you include him/her in your games. Don't worry if you think they can't get the same things as you out of the games you play – your friend with DS will be enjoying spending the time with you.



Why does my friend speak funny?

Nobody knows why people with Down syndrome find it so hard to speak clearly, but it is really frustrating for them. Imagine what it must be like to know what you want to say but your mouth won't let you say it how you want to say it. That's what it is like for someone with Down syndrome. Some children with Down syndrome use sign language because they find talking so very hard to do.

So, you can help by really listening carefully – looking at your friend while he/she is speaking is important too. If you don't understand what he/she has said, say "I'm sorry, I didn't hear that. Can you say it again for me?" and they will. Don't be embarrassed, you'll get used to it.

And you can learn some sign language so you can communicate with your classmate.

How can I learn sign language?

It's not that hard to learn sign language – many of the signs are quite obvious. Speak to your teacher about it and see if he/she can start using sign language with the whole class.

If there is a group of you who would like to learn sign language, then you could speak to your teacher or head teacher about setting up a sign language club at lunchtimes or after school.



My friend with Down syndrome keeps pushing me. What can I do about it?

React in just the same way as you would do with anyone else – Don't let him/her think that it's OK to push you or do anything you don't like.

So, say "I don't like it when you do that. Stop it, please" and they most likely will. Try to suggest something else to do, like playing with a ball or a hoop, for example.



Are there children with Down syndrome in other classes in other schools?

Yes – all the time! Lots of schools will have pupils with Down syndrome.

Here are some of the things that their classmates have said:

- "I like Claire because she's really funny."
- "Ben is really cool. He's really good at skateboarding."
- "Toby can play proper snooker!"
- "Mandy is ever so kind. She makes me feel better when I am sad."
- "Tommy's really amazing! In Year 1 he didn't say very much, but now he's really good at saying stuff."
- "Dan is a legend!"