



Down Syndrome

ASSOCIATION
WESTERN CAPE

For the older brothers and sisters

Congratulations! You have now become a big brother or a big sister. You were also once that small and tiny. But your new brother or sister is a little bit different, because he or she has got Down syndrome. You could be feeling very confused right now and are not too sure what is going on or what Down syndrome really is. Your Mom and Dad may be feeling a little sad from the news, but that is okay. You too may be feeling a little sad and you should allow yourself to cry if you feel you want to. Don't be afraid to ask your parents if you have any questions about the new baby.

What is Down syndrome?

The name DOWN SYNDROME comes from the person who first identified people who all had Down syndrome. He saw that they were a lot slower than other people and that they could not quite manage to do everything on their own and needed some help. His name was Doctor Langdon DOWN, and that is where the name Down syndrome comes from.

Having Down syndrome means that your brother or sister will be a bit slower than you at doing things. He or she may start walking and talking later than you when you were little. Developing at a slower rate is not such a bad thing, and he or she may need some help from you. Your parents will surely be happy that you play and help with the new baby. You should tell your friends and teachers about your brother or sister and what Down syndrome is.

Why do people have Down syndrome?

If you have Down syndrome, it is just by coincidence. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor; white, coloured or black; living in a country where it's hot or cold. Your parents can't be blamed, your mother didn't do something wrong during her pregnancy. The only thing doctors do know is that the older the mother gets when she becomes pregnant, chances get bigger that her baby will have Down syndrome.

How do I have to respond to people with Down syndrome?

Just the same way as you would respond to another person. You just have to keep some things in mind. Children with Down syndrome don't have such strong muscles, so it's hard for them to catch a ball or to ride a bicycle for a long while. Speak clearly because sometimes people with Down syndrome have some hearing problems. But you don't have to shout to them! It's also very important to be patient, sometimes it will take a bit longer when he or she wants to explain something. If you don't understand what they are saying, ask them to explain it again or if they want to show you what they mean. Everybody is different, and that's a good thing! Otherwise life would be quite boring, don't you think?