

Down Syndrome Association of Liberia

Facts About Down Syndrome

- Down syndrome affects people of all ages, races and economic levels.
- Down syndrome is the most frequently occurring chromosomal abnormality, occurring once in approximately every 733 live births.
- More than 400,000 people in the United States alone have Down syndrome.
- Approximately 5,000 people are born with Down syndrome in the U.S. each year.
- Down syndrome occurs when there are three, rather than two, copies of Chromosome 21 in a person's cells. Instead of 46 chromosomes, a person with Down syndrome has 47.
- The additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down syndrome.
- The average life expectancy of a person with Down syndrome is age 60, with many living into their 60's and 70's.
- Chromosome 21 has been fully sequenced – approximately 225 genes have been identified along this chromosome.
- Down syndrome got its name in 1866 when John Langdon Down, an English physician, published an accurate description of a person with Down syndrome, earning him recognition as the “father” of the syndrome.
- In 1959 French physician Jerome Lejeune identified Down syndrome as a chromosomal anomaly.
- There are three types of Down syndrome or Trisomy 21: non-disjunction, translocation and mosaic Down syndrome. The most common type is non-disjunction, accounting for 95 percent of all cases.
- It is estimated that the chance of having a second child with Down syndrome is about 1 in 100.
- Women age 35 and older have a significantly increased chance of having a child with Down syndrome. However, fewer women over the age of 35 are having babies. In actuality, 80% of children born with Down syndrome are born to women under the age of 35, primarily to women in their 20's.
- The only way to obtain a definitive diagnosis of Down syndrome is to perform a karyotype, which will examine the chromosomal make-up of the cell.