



Receiving a Diagnosis

Shortly after birth, a member of the neonatology team will examine your baby and will generally be the first to recognise the physical characteristics which form the basis for suspecting that a child may have Down syndrome.

It is a particularly difficult time, coupled with the natural stresses of childbirth and the shock of the discovery. Although there is no easy way to be informed, most families agree that having the baby present, being together and being told as soon as possible is the best way to proceed.

Many of the characteristics which indicate Down syndrome can also be present in the general population. Hence, if Down syndrome is suspected, a special test or Karyotype will be performed to confirm the diagnosis. It may take a day or two for the results to return.

There are common traits that will be looked for, however some babies with Down syndrome have only a few of these traits, while others have many. These include:

- Muscle hypotonia, low muscle tone
- Flat facial profile, a somewhat depressed nasal bridge and a small nose
- Oblique palpebral fissures, an upward slant to the eyes
- Dysplastic ear, an abnormal shape of the ear
- A single deep crease across the center of the palm
- Hyperflexibility, an excessive ability to extend the joints
- Dysplastic middle phalanx of the fifth finger, fifth finger has one flexion furrow instead of two
- Epicanthal folds, small skin folds on the inner corner of the eyes
- Excessive space between large and second toe
- Enlargement of tongue in relationship to size of mouth

Before you leave the hospital you will be visited by the Social Worker who will provide information and contacts for the disability services in your area.

If the baby has medical complications that require special paediatric care, he or she may be transferred to a children's hospital to receive the requisite professional care.

Down Syndrome Ireland has branches countrywide where you can access the advice and support of other parents in your area. For a list of branches and contact details see www.downsyndrome.ie

For more information contact:

Communications Office, DSC Tel: 661 8000 or email info@downsyndrome.ie