

# At-Home Treatments for Common Health Conditions of People with Down Syndrome

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Advocate  
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Group

Adult Down  
Syndrome Center  
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# Please note:

- This presentation is intended for families, caregivers, health care professionals, and service providers of individuals with Down syndrome.
- The information in this presentation is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for a medical, psychiatric, mental health, or behavioral evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment plan by a qualified professional.
- We recommend that you bring specific questions about an individual with Down syndrome to their medical and/or therapy providers.

# Objectives

- Describe common health conditions in adolescents and adults with Down syndrome.
- Share at-home treatments for addressing health conditions.
- Discuss when to consult a health care provider about a health condition.

# Resource Library

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar with the Advocate Medical Group logo and 'Adult Down Syndrome Center' text. A search bar contains 'I'm looking for...' and a 'MENU' button with a hamburger icon. Below the navigation is the 'Resource Library | All Resources' header. Three featured resource cards are displayed: 'People with Down Syndrome' (with a photo of a young woman), 'Families & Caregivers' (with a photo of a woman and a man), and 'Health Care Professionals' (with a photo of a woman talking to two men). Below these cards is a horizontal menu with five categories: 'Events, Classes & Programs' (with a bell icon and a 'See the Schedule' link), 'Video Gallery' (with a play button icon and a 'View All' link), 'Related Organizations' (with a sunburst icon and a 'See Listing of Links' link), 'Projects' (with a book icon and a 'See Our Latest Projects' link), and 'News' (with a document icon and a 'View News Articles' link).

Advocate Medical Group  
Adult Down Syndrome Center

I'm looking for...  MENU

Resource Library | All Resources

People with Down Syndrome

Families & Caregivers

Health Care Professionals

Events, Classes & Programs  
[See the Schedule](#)

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<https://adsresources.advocatehealth.com/>

# Ear wax build up (cerumen impaction)

# Ear wax build up

## Signs and symptoms

- Sensation of ear fullness
- Hearing loss
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus)
- Ear pain
- Dizziness
- Ear drainage or odor

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
  - Small, curved ear canals
  - Dry skin
- May not report symptoms
- May observe other symptoms
  - Change in behavior
  - Not paying attention
  - Not following directions
  - Losing skills

# Ear wax build up

**Speak to your health care provider before using at-home treatments for earwax if you have a hole (perforation) or tube in your eardrum.**

**It is generally recommended to NOT put any liquid in an ear with a hole or tube.**



# Ear wax build up

## At-home treatments

- Over-the-counter ear drops with carbamide peroxide (e.g., Debrox)
- Baby oil, almond oil, mineral oil, olive oil, or diluted hydrogen peroxide
  - 3-4 drops, 2 times per week
- Cotton swabs on outside part of ear

## Consult a health care provider

- Eardrum has a tube or perforation (hole)
- At-home treatments are unsuccessful

# Toenail fungus (onychomycosis)

# Toenail fungus

## Signs and symptoms

- Yellow to white discoloration of the nail
- Thick and brittle nails
- Splitting of the nails
- Separation of the nail from underlying skin
- Pain

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
  - Immune system, dry skin, self-care, venous insufficiency, obesity, hallux valgus (bunions), poor-fitting shoes
- May not report symptoms
- May observe other symptoms
  - Change in behavior

# Toenail fungus

## At-home treatments

- Proper foot hygiene
  - Wash and dry feet
  - Trim toenails
- Diet
- Topical treatments, wrap with gauze
  - Vicks VapoRub, tea tree oil, vinegar
  - Ketoconazole, econazole, clotrimazole

## Consult a health care provider

- To confirm diagnosis
- At-home treatments are unsuccessful
- Nail care not possible at home
- Pain

# Constipation

# Constipation

## Signs and symptoms

- Infrequent bowel movements (fewer than 3 per week)
- Hard, lumpy, difficult to pass stools
- Bloating, abdominal discomfort
- Straining, bleeding, and/or pain with pooping
- Feeling of incomplete emptying
- Stool incontinence (accidents)
- Urine incontinence
- Urinary tract infections

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
- May not report symptoms
- May observe other symptoms
  - Change in behavior
- Insufficient fluid intake

# Constipation

## At-home treatments

- Eat more fiber such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Drink more fluids
- Increase physical activity
- Fiber supplements
- Stool softeners

## Consult a health care provider

- At-home treatments are unsuccessful
- Pain
- Increasing pain and vomiting – go to the emergency room

# Dry skin



# Dry skin

## Signs and symptoms

- Redness
- Flaking
- Itching
- Cracking
- Often worse in very cold/hot and dry weather conditions

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
- Generally, not a serious problem but can be quite bothersome

# Dry skin

## At-home treatments

- Liberal use of moisturizing cream or ointment (instead of lotion)
  - 3-4 times per day may be needed
  - Contain alpha hydroxy acids (helps remove loose layers of dry skin)
  - Vaseline, Lubriderm, Eucerin, Udderly Smooth, and many others
- Apply right after shower or bath when skin is moist
- Cotton gloves or socks



**Skin Care**

It is important to wash the skin on my body, too!

If it is hard to reach a part of my body, I can use a long-handled sponge.



Moisturizer helps dry skin and keeps the skin on my hands and body healthy.



I can wear gloves after I put on moisturizer to help with dryness, or protect my hands from feeling greasy or sticky.



I can also drink water to keep my skin healthy.



I can take care of my skin! Taking care of my skin keeps me healthy!

# Dry skin

## At-home treatments

- Mild soaps (e.g., Lever 2000, Dove, Dial with moisturizers, Cerave, etc.)
- Decrease frequency, length, and temperature of showers
- Change socks midday
- Avoid exposure to very cold/hot and dry air
- Humidifier
- Good hydration
- Sunscreen

## Consult a health care provider

- An infection develops
- At-home treatments are unsuccessful

# Chronic cough

# Chronic cough

## Signs and symptoms

- A cough that lasts longer than 8 weeks (4 weeks in a child)
- Many possible causes

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
  - Craniofacial features
  - Adeno-tonsillar hypertrophy
  - Airway size
  - Low tone
  - Obesity
  - Chronic vasomotor rhinitis

# Chronic cough

## At-home treatments

- Oral hydration
- Avoid possible irritants
- Cough suppressant (e.g., throat lozenge, tea and honey, guaifenesin and dextromethorphan)
- Over-the-counter nasal sprays (e.g., fluticasone, mometasone)
- Nasal saline drops or rinses
- Allergy medications (e.g., loratadine, fexofenadine)
- Medication to “thin” the secretions (e.g., guaifenesin)

## Consult a health care provider

- At-home treatments are unsuccessful
- Weight loss without effort
- Coughing up blood or phlegm
- Wheezing or shortness of breath
- Hoarseness that doesn't go away
- A drenching overnight sweat

# Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)

# GERD

## Signs and symptoms

- Pain in the chest or upper stomach
- Chronic cough
- Regurgitation (food traveling back up into the mouth)
- Sore throat
- Sour taste
- Hoarse voice

## Considerations in people with DS

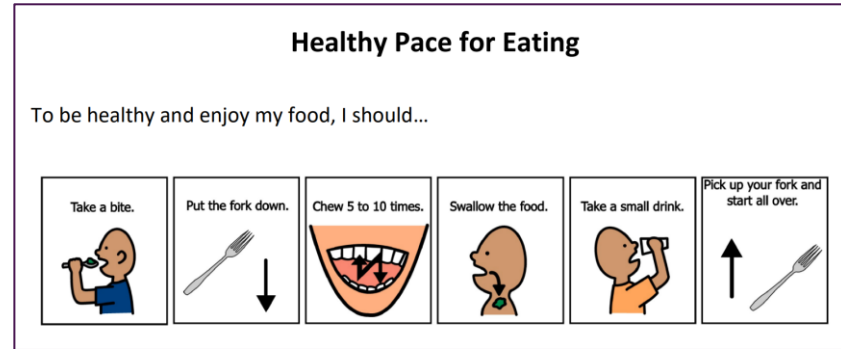
- Sphincter tone
- Obesity
- Sleep apnea
- Dietary habits
- Not reporting milder, chronic symptoms
- Poor sleep



# GERD

## At-home treatments

- Eat smaller meals
- Eat more slowly
- Lose weight
- Do not eat 3-4 hours before laying down or going to sleep
- Elevate the head of the bed with a riser or blocks
- Over-the-counter medications (e.g., Tums, Rolaids, Maalox)
- H-2 blockers, PPI's



- Things to avoid:
  - Fatty, spicy, and citrus foods
  - Caffeinated or carbonated beverages
  - Medications that can make GERD worse (e.g., ibuprofen)
  - Wearing clothing that is tight around the abdomen

# GERD

## **Consult a health care provider**

- At-home treatments are unsuccessful
- Weight loss
- Recurrent vomiting
- Difficulty or pain with swallowing

# Hypothyroidism

# Hypothyroidism

## Signs and symptoms

- Weakness
- Dry skin
- Increased tiredness
- Increased sensitivity to cold temperatures
- Weight gain
- Coarse hair
- Change in cognitive function
- Change in menstruation
- Mood change

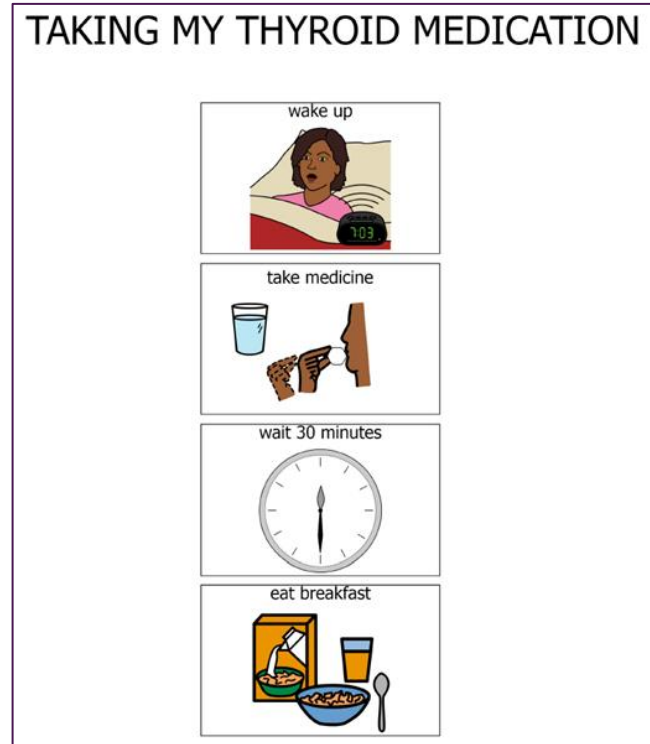
## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
- Many of the symptoms are already present in people with DS
- May not report symptoms
- May observe other symptoms
  - Change in behavior

# Hypothyroidism

## At-home treatments

- Taking medication consistently and correctly
- Consider zinc supplement



# Hypothyroidism

## Consult a health care provider

- Screening recommended every 1-2 years
- Symptoms suggestive of hypothyroidism
- Recurrence of symptoms
- Symptoms of hyperthyroidism (e.g., anxiety, agitation, diarrhea, tremor, fast heartbeat, etc.)

# Pneumonia

# Pneumonia

## Signs and symptoms

- Cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Chest pain

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
  - Immunity
  - GERD
  - Sleep apnea
  - Swallowing



# Pneumonia

## At-home treatments

- Cough suppressants for mild symptoms
- Prevention
  - Slowing down when eating
  - Good handwashing
  - Vitamin and mineral supplements?
    - Multivitamin, vitamin C, zinc
  - Dental hygiene and care
  - Treat GERD
  - Treat sleep apnea



# Pneumonia

## Consult a health care provider

- Persistent mild symptoms
- Increasing symptoms
- High fever
- Go to the emergency room if difficulty breathing
- Prevention
  - Immunizations

# Blepharitis

# Blepharitis

## Signs and symptoms

- Inflammation or infection of the eyelids
- Redness of the eyelids
- Sticky secretions on eyelids or eyelashes
- Sometimes associated with conjunctivitis (pink eye/redness of the white part of the eye)

## Considerations in people with DS

- More common
  - Bacterial infection
  - Acne rosacea
  - Seborrhea
  - Autoimmune

# Blepharitis

## At-home treatments

- Keep hands away from eyes
- Warm compresses
- Light scrubbing
  - Half water, half baby shampoo
  - Over-the-counter eye scrubs
- Change pillowcase regularly
- Treat associated conditions
- Ongoing preventative measures

## Consult a health care provider

- Persistent symptoms or irritation
- Conjunctivitis
- Increasing redness or swelling
- Pain

# Resources

# DSMIG-USA

- Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group

- Membership
- Speaker Series
- Project ECHO



**DSMIG-USA**  
Down Syndrome Medical Interest Group

**FREE RESOURCES**

**SHARE WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER**

- Down Syndrome Project ECHO is a monthly virtual meeting for health care providers to learn and seek input from expert providers.
- The DSMIG Speaker Series consists of webinars and enduring materials designed to share knowledge and experience related to the care of people with Down syndrome and clinical research related to Down syndrome.
- DSMIG vetted resources including articles and important guidelines related to child and adult health issues, and health utilization by people with Down syndrome.



find out more at:  
**DSMIG-USA.ORG**



# Articles

[Agitated or Challenging Behavior in People with DS and Alzheimer's Disease](#)

[Cerumen Impaction \(earwax\)](#)

[Chronic Cough](#)

[Constipation](#)

[Does TSH Tell the Whole Story?](#)

[Down Syndrome EyeWiki](#)

[DS and Hidradenitis Suppurativa](#)

[Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease](#)

[Hypothyroidism](#)

[Onychomycosis \(fungal infection of the nails\)](#)

[Pneumococcal Vaccines](#)

[Pneumonia](#)

[Tips for Cutting Fingernails and Toenails](#)

[Use of Probiotics](#)

[Vision in Adults with DS](#)





# Videos and visuals

[Activities of Daily Living Videos](#)

[Getting Ear Wax Removed](#)

[Healthy Pace for Eating Video and Visuals](#)

[How to Wash Your Hands Video](#)

[Skin Care Visual](#)

[Taking My Thyroid Medication Visual](#)

[Tips for Dealing with Dry Skin Video](#)

[Visuals for Medical Appointments](#)



# Webinars and podcasts

[Aging and Alzheimer's Disease in Adults with DS Webinar](#)

[Behavior Changes in Individuals with DS Webinar](#)

[Common & Uncommon Health Conditions in Adolescents & Adults with DS Webinar](#)

[Decline in Skills and Regression in Adolescents & Adults with DS Webinar](#)

[Skin Conditions in DS Podcast Episodes](#)



# Resource lists by topic

[Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia](#)

[Decline in Skills and Regression](#)

[Nutrition and Weight](#)

[Self-Care and Hygiene](#)

[Sensory](#)

[Skin and Hair](#)

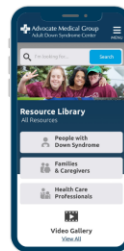
[Sleep](#)

# Adult Down Syndrome Center

- [Resource Library](#)
- [Email List](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)

## FREE HEALTH RESOURCES

*for people with Down syndrome, families and caregivers, and professionals*



### Resource Library



Find information on aging, puberty, mental health, self-talk, weight management, Alzheimer's disease, social skills, and more.

[adscresources.advocatehealth.com](https://adscresources.advocatehealth.com)

### Facebook & Instagram



[@adulddownsyndromecenter](https://www.facebook.com/adulddownsyndromecenter)

### Email List



[www.eepurl.com/c7uV1v](http://www.eepurl.com/c7uV1v)

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