

Supporting People with Down Syndrome in Living a Healthy Lifestyle

Adult Down Syndrome Center

April 27, 2024 | Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L



Why is it important for individuals with Down syndrome to learn how to live a healthy lifestyle?

Why

- Good health
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Social
- Safety
- Achieve goals
- Greater independence

What skills need to be learned?

What

- Eating a healthy diet
- Drinking enough water
- Being physically active
- Getting good sleep
- Managing stress and emotions
- Completing self-care tasks

How can we help?

It depends on the individual's...

- Preferences
- Abilities
- Motivating factors/goals
- Living situation
- Learning style
- and more...

What works for most?

- Visuals and videos
- Modeling
- Repetition
- Practice
- Social support
- Being as concrete as possible
- Establishing a routine

Healthy eating

Common challenges

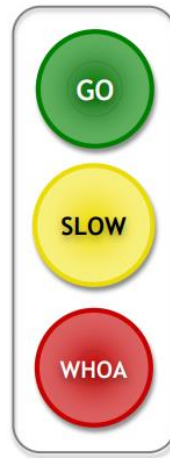
- Inability to feel full / portion control
- Preference for foods that are not as healthy as others
- Picky eaters
- Eating too fast
- Abstract concept

Identify healthy choices

- Simple tips
 - Choose grilled instead of fried
 - Fill half your plate with fruits and veggies
 - Drink water instead of sweetened beverages

Identify healthy choices

- Stoplight
 - “Red light” foods – rarely eat, special treat
 - “Yellow light” foods – sometimes eat
 - “Green light” foods – eat daily



[Example from Intermountain Healthcare](#)

ANYTIME CHOICES (GO)

- Healthiest within each food group
- Lowest in fat, sugar and calories
- Highest in healthy nutrients-like vitamins, minerals & fiber
- Enjoy 2 or more* from each food group, daily
*up to recommended amount

SOMETIMES CHOICES (SLOW)

- Higher in fat, sugar and calories
- Lower in healthy nutrients
- Aim for 0-1 serving from each food group, daily

RARELY CHOICES (WHOA)

- Highest in fat, sugar and calories
- Lowest in healthy nutrients
- Save for special times; 1 or 2 from each food group, weekly

[Example from East Carolina University](#)

GO: Eat daily.

Whole grains 	Fruits & vegetables 	Healthy proteins 	Milk, cheese, & yogurt
Refined grains 	Lean, ground meats 	Low-sugar cookies, cakes 	Jelly, mayo, honey
Dessert, donuts, candy 	Fried foods 	Soda & chocolate milk 	Processed meat

SLOW: Eat only once or twice a week.

WHOA: Eat only once or twice a month.

Availability & choices

- Keep mostly healthy options (“green light” foods) in the home
 - Buy fewer “yellow light” foods
 - Save “red light” foods for special occasions
 - Look for alternatives
 - E.g., Zucchini noodles instead of spaghetti, lettuce wraps instead of bread, cauliflower (mashed potatoes, pizza crust, rice, etc.)
- Label foods
- Involve the person in shopping for/preparing foods

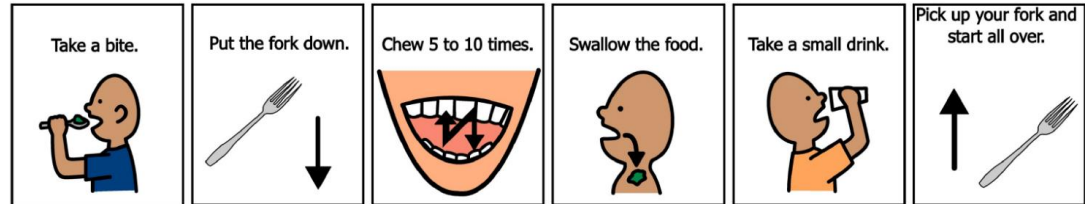


Portion control & satiation

- Pre-portion snacks
- Use measuring cups
- Serve food in stages
 - E.g., vegetable/fruit first, protein second, grains third
- If a person wants seconds...
 - Start with a smaller serving
 - Choose foods that you can have seconds of (e.g., vegetables)
 - Wait until everyone is done with their first plate
- Weekly dessert/treat allotment
 - Basket, calendar

Portion control & satiation

- Serve food from the counter/stove
- Encourage a slower pace of eating
- Use smaller plates, a portion plate, or a divided plate
- Dining out – split meals, bring home leftovers













Healthy Pace for Eating [Video](#) & [Handout](#)

Healthy Snack Ideas [Handout](#)


Healthy Snack Ideas


 Handful of cherry tomatoes	 GreeK yogurt	 Almonds
 Turkey and zucchini roll-ups	 Carrots with hummus	 String cheese
 Cottage cheese with blueberries	 Apple slices with reduced fat peanut butter	 Cucumber slices with yogurt dip

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Tips for Eating Healthy Meals



Eat fruits and vegetables with every meal.

Starting your meal with a salad is a good way to do this. 



Or fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. 

Eat whole grains.

Eat wheat bread instead of white bread.  

Eat brown rice instead of white rice.  

Choose grilled food instead of fried food.

Eat grilled chicken or fish instead of fried or crispy chicken or fish.  

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Tips for Eating Healthy Meals [Handout](#)



Fruits and Vegetables [Video](#) & [Handout](#)

[ALL RESOURCES](#) on Nutrition & Healthy Eating

Hydration

Common challenges

- Inadequate fluid intake
- Taste
- Pop/soda

Hydration

- Inadequate fluid intake
 - Schedule, calendar, visual
 - Choose container to drink out of
- Taste
 - Flavor with fruit
 - Try carbonated water
 - Low-calorie packets?
- Pop/soda
 - For every pop they have, they need to drink X glasses of water
 - Visual reminder



	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
WEEK 1							
WEEK 2							
WEEK 3							
WEEK 4							

101010.com



Keeping Hydrated [Video](#) & [Handout](#)

WHAT TO DRINK INSTEAD OF POP/SODA



★ WATER ★



Add fruit for flavor!

SPARKLING / FLAVORED WATER






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What to Drink Instead of Pop/Soda [Handout](#)

STAYING HYDRATED




Drinking water is important!

It is good for your skin. 


It is good for your teeth. 

It helps you go to the bathroom regularly. 


It helps you do your best at home, school, work, and other places!


Each day you should drink...



2 large water bottles 

OR

4 regular water bottles 

OR

8 cups of water 

 Drinking water helps you stay healthy! 

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Staying Hydrated [Handout](#)

Physical activity

Common challenges

- Physical limitations
 - Low muscle tone
 - Joint laxity
 - Obesity
 - Endurance
- Time
- Opportunity
- Do not enjoy it
- Aging out of school

Physical activity

- Build it into the schedule/calendar
- Break it into shorter periods throughout the day
- Explore at-home options
 - Videos, dancing, chores
- Make it social
 - Zoom
 - Family activities
- Rewards
 - Stickers, new exercise clothes, tablet time, etc.

WAYS TO BE ACTIVE!

Play a sport.

Join Special Olympics.

Join Special Rec.

Go for a jog.

Do housework/chores.

Dance.

Do an exercise video.

Stretch

Use exercise equipment.

Walk your dog.

Take the stairs.

Lift weights.

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Ways to be Active
[Handout](#)

ALPHABET WORKOUT

Create a workout by spelling your name, the day of the week, or another word or phrase of your choosing!

A	10 jumping jacks	N	Run in place for 30 sec.
B	15 crunches	O	10 butt kicks
C	5 squats	P	10 high knees
D	5 push-ups	Q	5 squats
E	Wall sit for 20 sec.	R	10 jumping jacks
F	15 arm circles	S	15 arm punches
G	10 mountain climbers	T	Plank for 20 sec.
H	5 lunges on each leg	U	5 push-ups
I	15 arm punches	V	15 arm circles
J	Plank for 20 sec.	W	10 mountain climbers
K	Wall sit for 20 sec.	X	5 lunges on each leg
L	15 crunches	Y	Run in place for 30 sec.
M	10 high knees	Z	10 butt kicks

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Alphabet Workout
[Handout](#)

Special Olympics

SCHOOL OF STRENGTH

Exercise

You can become a better athlete by enjoying physical activity outside of your sports practice. There are many ways to be physically active. Certain exercises can help you improve the skills needed for your sport.

Your goal with FIT 5 is to do at least 5 days of exercise!

Types of Exercise:

ENDURANCE STRENGTH FLEXIBILITY BALANCE

Special Olympics
[School of Strength](#) and [Fit5](#)

[All physical activity resources](#)

Sleep

Common challenges

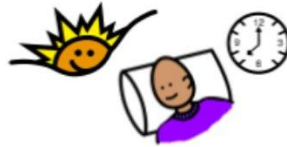
- Going to bed too late
- Sleeping all day
- Reverse sleep/wake cycles
- Not going to bed until everyone in house is asleep
- Unable to fall asleep without someone nearby
- Waking in the middle of the night and going into parents' room
- Sleep apnea

Establish a sleep routine

Go to bed at the same time every night.



Wake up at the same time each morning.



Get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.



Make a good sleep space.



TV



tablet



phone

Have a healthy bedtime routine.

Hygiene



brush teeth



wash face



go to
bathroom

Relaxation



write in
journal



pray



read



take deep
breaths



stretch

Establish a sleep routine

- Use visual supports and schedules
- Set alarms
 - When it is time to turn off TV, start bedtime routine, go to bed, wake up in the morning
- Include choice in the bedtime routine
- Create a morning routine to avoid lingering in bed



Sleep Webinar [Recording](#) & [Slides](#)

Ways to Get Good Sleep [Handout](#)

Ways to Get Good Sleep

- I should wake up at the same time each day.
- I should go to bed at the same time every night.
- I should create a good sleep space.
 - TV
 - tablet
 - phone
- I should have a bedtime routine.
 - Hygiene: brush teeth, wash face, go to bathroom
 - Relaxation: write in journal, pray, read, take deep breaths, stretch

Remembering this will help me sleep better and be healthy!

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Addressing Challenges with Falling or Staying Asleep

August 2020 | Brian Chicoine, MD and Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L - Adult Down Syndrome Center

We frequently receive questions about sleep. Individuals with Down syndrome and/or their families report that they have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. In this article, we will share strategies to help individuals with Down syndrome: fall asleep, avoid waking up in the middle of the night, and/or fall back to sleep if they wake up in the middle of the night.

Strategy #1: Practice good sleep hygiene.

Sleep hygiene can be defined as a series of healthy sleep habits that can improve your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. This includes refraining from activities that promote excessive evening alertness or interrupt the natural process of falling asleep.

Good sleep hygiene habits include:

- Allowing time for our bodies to digest dinner.
- Falling asleep at the same time each night.
- Setting up a healthy sleep space.
- Establishing a bedtime routine. [Visual supports](#) can be helpful when trying to establish or maintain a routine. Several visuals related to sleep can be found [here](#).
- Waking up at the same time each morning.
- Drinking water as soon as you wake up.
- Walking/stretching within the first hour of waking up.

Sleep habits to avoid include:

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Addressing Challenges with Falling or Staying Asleep [Article](#)



How to Use a CPAP Machine [Video](#)

[ALL RESOURCES](#) on Sleep

Stress & emotions

Common challenges

- Identifying stress and emotions
- Effectively communicating about their stress and emotions
- Using healthy ways of managing stress and emotions

Stress & emotions

- Practice identifying emotions
 - Look at pictures, act it out
 - Good and fine are not emotions!
- Separate emotions from behaviors
 - It is ok to feel all of our emotions, but it is not ok to use bad behaviors.
- Identify stressors
- Identify strategies to manage stress and emotions
- Create a plan

Identify emotions

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Emotions [Handout](#)

Things my body may feel or do when I am ANXIOUS, ANGRY, or STRESSED

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Body Changes (Anxious, Angry, Stressed) [Handout](#)

Things my body may feel or do when I am HAPPY

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Body Changes (Happy) [Handout](#)

Strategies



Tips for Dealing with Stress
[Video](#)

[All stress and emotions resources](#)



[Stress triggers visual](#)

Strategies

Strategies to Control my Anger

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Strategies to Control My Anger [Handout](#)

Strategies To Help Me Calm Down

CALM BREATHING

pretend to smell a flower to inhale

pretend to blow out a candle to exhale

CALM THOUGHTS

squeeze hands

count to ten

CALM MUSCLES

be stiff like a statue

be loose like an inflatable man

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Strategies To Help Me Calm Down [Handout](#)

"I" Statements

I feel _____

When you _____

Because _____

Please _____

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"I" Statements [Handout](#)


Make a plan

Managing Emotions

Managing my emotions means I am in control of how I feel and what I do.


I can manage my emotions!

Take a deep breath




deep breath

Stop and think about my choices




stop and think

Ask for help




ask for help

Tell people how I feel with "I" Statements




"I" statements

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Managing Emotions Handout
[Female](#) and [Male](#)

When I'm angry I will...

 **STOP.**

 **THINK.**

 **MAKE A GOOD CHOICE.**

When _____
makes me angry,

I will try _____, or
_____, or

so that I keep my cool!

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Plan for When I'm Angry
[Handout](#)

Self-care

Common challenges

- Lack fine motor and coordination skills
- Takes too long
- Do not know the steps
- Not thorough
- Easy access to help
- Sensory

Self-care

- Time and space to do on their own
 - Practice on weekends, choosing times of day to work on it (e.g., morning or evening)
- Task analysis, breaking down into steps
- Prepare the night before
 - Lay out clothes, make lunch, pack bag, etc.
- Make modifications to increase independence
- Create reminders
- Visuals
- Sensory techniques

Bathing and Showering Tips

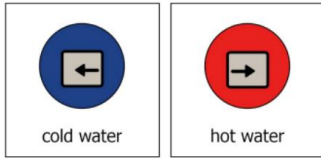
March 2021 | Natalie Rivera, OTS and Katie Frank, PhD, OTR/L - Occupational therapy student and occupational therapist

Bathing and showering may be difficult for some individuals with Down syndrome for many reasons. Below are a variety of adaptive strategies and equipment to promote safety and independence with this self-care task.

A long-handled sponge or a washcloth with handles can help individuals clean all areas of their body independently, including those that are hard to reach or not visible.



Placing laminated "hot" and "cold" labels inside your shower can allow individuals to adjust the water temperature with ease and increased safety.



Nail polish or tape can be used to indicate where to turn the shower knob to in order to reach an ideal temperature.

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Bathing & Showering Tips
[Article](#)



Lotion Options

I can use lotion or creams to make my dry skin feel better. If lotion or creams do not feel good, I can use other options to help my dry skin!

Some lotion I can use when I have wet skin, like in the shower:

Some lotion I can use as a spray, just like sunscreen:

Tips for Dealing with Dry
Skin [Video](#) & Lotion
Options [Handout](#)

Tips for Washing and Rinsing Hair in the Shower

February 2021 | Adult Down Syndrome Center -

Some families have shared with us that washing and rinsing hair can be a challenging task for their loved ones with Down syndrome. We have compiled a list of suggestions from families and shared them below. There are strategies that address the whole process as well as strategies that address certain steps that may be difficult.





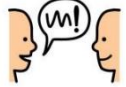

- Use visuals.
 - Create a visual that shows the steps of washing and rinsing hair.
 - Create a visual that shows how much shampoo/conditioner should be used.
 - Create a visual that identifies all the spots on the head that should be washed and rinsed.
- Play a song or part of a song that is the amount of time that should be spent washing or rinsing.
- Put a mirror in the shower.
- Use bottles with pumps to limit the amount of shampoo/conditioner dispensed.
- Use baby/children's tear-free shampoo. Some people find it helpful to put the shampoo in a bottle without a label or a bottle that is seen as more "adult."
- Explain what rinsed hair feels like ("squeaky clean").
- Encourage your loved one to brush/comb their hair in the shower. This can help get the shampoo/conditioner out and increase rinsing time.
- Laminate a photo of a highly motivating superstar, crush, friend, or athlete. Tape it to the spot on the ceiling at which they should look when they rinse their hair. Encourage them to "talk" to the person while they run their fingers through their hair ten times.
- If possible, use a handheld shower head. It may help the individual have greater control over the direction of the water.
- Put a plastic cup in the shower. Pouring water over the head can help rinse hair more thoroughly and quickly.
- Use a shower visor to keep water off of the face during shampooing.



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Tips for Washing & Rinsing Hair
[Article](#)

Story About Grooming/Hygiene for Girls

















<p>It is important for me to take care of my body.</p> 	<p>Taking care of my body will help me feel good about myself!</p> 	<p>I need to do the following to take care of my body.</p> 	<p>Wash my face.</p> 	<p>Brush my teeth.</p> 
<p>Wash my hair.</p> 	<p>Wash my body.</p> 	<p>Brush my hair.</p> 	<p>Put on deodorant.</p> 	<p>Cut my nails.</p> 
<p>I might shave my armpits and legs.</p> 	<p>It is also important for me to take care of my clothing.</p> 	<p>My clothing should not be dirty and should not smell.</p> 	<p>If I have any questions, I can ask my mom or dad.</p> 	<p>People will want to be around me if I take care of myself.</p> 

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[Grooming and hygiene for girls](#)

Story About Grooming/Hygiene for Boys

<p>It is important for me to take care of my body.</p> 	<p>Taking care of my body will help me feel good about myself!</p> 	<p>I need to do the following to take care of my body.</p> 	<p>Wash my face.</p> 	<p>Brush my teeth.</p> 
<p>Wash my hair.</p> 	<p>Wash my body.</p> 	<p>Brush my hair.</p> 	<p>Put on deodorant.</p> 	<p>Cut my nails.</p> 
<p>I may want to shave my face. It is ok to ask for help.</p> 	<p>It is also important for me to take care of my clothing.</p> 	<p>My clothes should not be dirty.</p> 	<p>My clothing should not smell.</p> 	<p>If I have any questions, I can ask my mom or dad.</p> 
<p>People will want to be around me if I take care of myself.</p> 				

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[Grooming and hygiene for boys](#)

Pants Without Fasteners

Bimanual dexterity and fine motor skills can be difficult for many individuals with DS, and difficulty with these skills can impact dressing.

There are (stylish!) options to promote independence with lower body dressing. Options may:

- Eliminate need for fastening or zipping closures, which may speed up dressing and alleviate frustration
- Provide easy-close alternatives
- Resemble standard pants, jeans, or khakis
- Be available in petite sizes or short lengths

While not an exhaustive list, some examples include:

- Pants with an elastic waist
- Pull-on pants, jeans, or khakis
- Pants with magnetic and/or Velcro closures

*These terms may be helpful in search engines or when online shopping

Other brands or helpful terms to search include:

- Tommy Hilfiger Adaptive
- MagnaClick brand

Prices, fabrics, and availability vary, although options can be found at many common retailers such as Kohls, Target, Nordstrom, Macy's, and Amazon.



Adaptive Shoes

Getting shoes on and off or tying shoelaces can be difficult for many people with DS.

There are options for adaptive shoelaces and shoes to help!

Adaptive Shoelaces:

Elastic Shoelaces

- Replaces standard shoelaces in any lace-up shoe
- Turns lace-up shoes into slip-ons
- Available at many retailers and Amazon (typically between \$5 - \$10)



HICKIES Laces

- Replaces standard laces in any lace-up shoe
- Turns lace-up shoes into slip-ons
- Available at www.hickies.com and Amazon (typically less than \$20)



Zubits Magnetic Closures:

- Attaches to standard laces
- Turns lace-up shoes into slip-ons
- Available on Amazon (typically less than \$20)



PERSONAL HYGIENE CHART

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
take bath or shower							
brush teeth							
wash face							
use deodorant							
use lotion							
brush hair							
shave							
nail care							



Pants Without Fasteners
[Article](#)

Adaptive Shoes
[Article](#)

[Personal hygiene chart](#)

[ALL RESOURCES](#) on Self-Care and Hygiene

Resources:
adscresources.advocatehealth.com

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resources



email newsletter

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