

National Down Syndrome Society
Changing Lives: Down Syndrome & the Health Care Professional

Presenting a Diagnosis of Down Syndrome

Keep the following suggestions in mind when giving a diagnosis, both pre-natally and post-natally:

- If at all possible, give a pre-natal diagnosis in person rather than over the telephone.
- Pre-natally and post-natally, tell both parents together. Otherwise, the mother will have to tell the rest of the family by herself.
- A health care professional with a relationship to the mother should give the diagnosis.
- Post-natally, there may be clear indications of Down syndrome in the last stages of delivery. It is best to wait until the mother is in the recovery room to inform.
- Bring the baby into the room when discussing the physical indications of Down syndrome.
- Do not make a positive diagnosis until a karyotype has been done.
- Both pre-natally and post-natally, do not express an opinion about the parents' situation. Ask what information they would find most helpful. Give resources: support groups, early intervention centers, literature.
- Make sure to discuss the diagnosis and field questions from the parents on more than one occasion. Parents may not be able to retain all the information in one sitting.
- Most importantly, don't try to be predictive. It is impossible to foresee the future of any child. A broad picture should be painted which recognizes every child's capacity to develop individually.