

Notes from Dr. Brian Skotko (shared by DSAF)

COVID-19 & Down Syndrome

As many of you know, I am the director of the Down Syndrome Program at Massachusetts General Hospital. Our team put together these practical questions to your pressing questions about COVID-19 for people with Down syndrome.

Are people with Down syndrome more vulnerable to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-2019)?

The simple answer is that the majority of people with Down syndrome are NOT considered immunocompromised patients. The nuanced answer is that people with Down syndrome can have slight disturbances in their immune system, making them more vulnerable to infections. We recommend using your loved one's ability to handle past infections/viruses as a good barometer of his/her immune system and how they might respond, should they become infected with COVID-19. The CDC offers recommendations on what all families should be doing right now.

[Click Here for CDC Recommendations](#)

Some people with Down syndrome who have active, untreated, or chronic health conditions might be in a "high-risk" category, which means that they may experience more severe symptoms if infected with COVID-19. These would include patients with Down syndrome who are actively being treated for leukemia or other cancers, have untreated heart conditions, chronic, untreated respiratory diseases, and poorly controlled diabetes. The CDC has also indicated that older persons, in general, are more vulnerable to the virus. If your loved one with Down syndrome falls into one of these "high-risk" categories, the CDC offers recommendations on what you can be doing right now.

[Click Here for CDC High Risk Factors](#)

Here is a great podcast interview with Dr. Andrew Nowalk, an infectious disease expert, describing coronavirus in the context of Down syndrome.

[Click Here for Podcast](#)

How can I explain the coronavirus to my loved one with Down syndrome?

- Massachusetts General Hospital offers 7 ways to support kids and teens during the pandemic.

[Click Here for the 7 Ways to Support Kids and Teens!](#)

- Great article from the Child Mind Institute for adults to help with talking to kids about coronavirus

[Click Here for the Article!](#)

- Audio story from NPR for kids, plus printable comic strip

[Click Here for Audio Story!](#)

- Excellent list of videos, songs, and show segments from PBS, including segments from Daniel Tiger to Sesame Street helping with way to keep kids safe and healthy

[Click Here for Ideas on How to Talk to Your Kids about Virus!](#)

- Free, printable social story by Amanda McGuinness about the coronavirus, which might be especially helpful for younger patients with Down syndrome, those with a dual diagnosis of autism, and those with complex medical needs.

[Click Here for Social Story!](#)

Should we be implementing social distancing for people with Down syndrome?

Social distancing would be wise for all of us. Social distancing means avoiding public spaces, generally limiting your movement outside of the home, and staying at least 6 feet away from non-family members. Social distancing has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of the disease.

[Flattening the Curve!](#)

[Do's and Don'ts of Social Distancing!](#)

How can I boost the immune system of my loved one with Down syndrome?

Here are some proven tips in an article from the New York Times.

[Click Here for Article on Boosting Immune System!](#)

What are the educational rights of students with Down syndrome if they are quarantined at home?

The U.S. Department of Education has developed this comprehensive fact sheet explaining what educational rights are maintained for students with disabilities who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[Click Here for Fact Sheet](#)