

# Health

## Looking After Yourself

A DOWN'S SYNDROME ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION



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SYNDROME  
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# HEALTH

## *Looking After Yourself*

**Health is about more than being free of illness. It is also about having a healthy lifestyle, which helps you feel good physically and mentally. It also means looking after yourself.**

**These are a few things you can do to improve your health and keep yourself well.**

The information department would like to thank the members of the London Down 2 Earth group for their help in writing this booklet.

**Kitty, Robert, Eleanor, Bethan, Chloe, Gershom,  
Kent, Luke, Karen, Laura, Jenny**

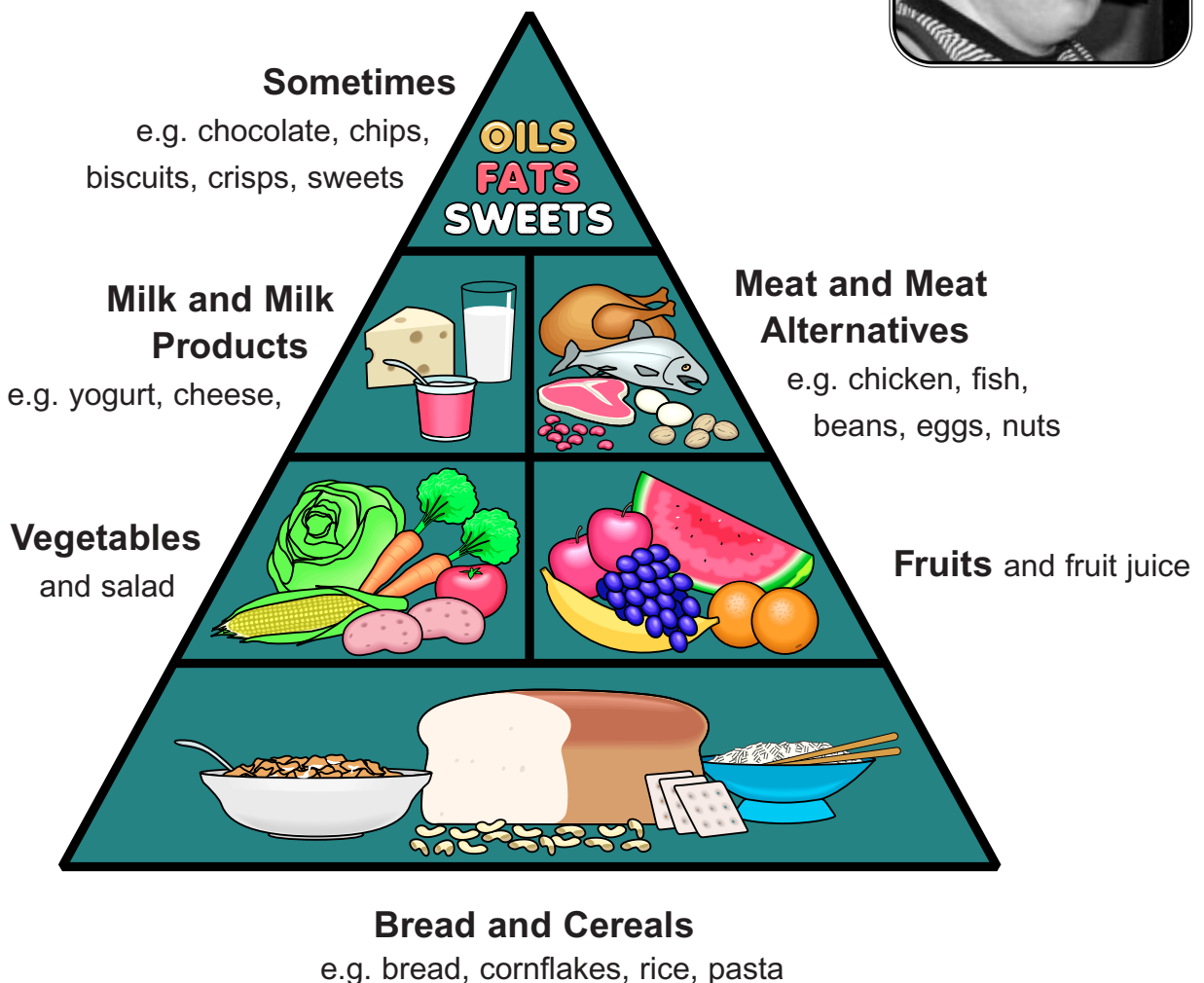
# Diet

Eating a balanced diet helps to keep you a healthy weight, and may help to stop you getting some diseases. It makes you feel good too!

The Food Pyramid shows you what a healthy diet looks like. Choose some foods from each of the different groups every day. You can eat more of the foods at the bottom of the pyramid, but not too much from the foods at the top. The Sometimes group is for special treats - only once or twice a day.

Luke says

**breakfast is an important meal**



# Diet

Jenny says

**try not to snack  
between meals**



Here are some more simple tips for eating a healthy diet.

- Eat regular meals
- Eat a variety of different foods
- Cut down on sweets and puddings
- Drink lots of water
- If you like to drink alcohol, don't have more than one or two glasses a day.

Kent says

**if you drink,  
don't over do it**



# Exercise

Regular exercise is very important to keep your body healthy. It will also help to keep you a healthy weight. There are lots of different ways of exercising, for instance walking, dancing, or swimming. Find some activities that you enjoy. Try to do some exercise at least 3 times a week.

You can also look for ways to keep active, like walking to the shops instead of taking the bus.

If you have not exercised for a long time, begin by doing just a little at a time. You can gradually increase the amount of exercise that you do.



Chloe says

**Gardening is a good way to get some exercise**

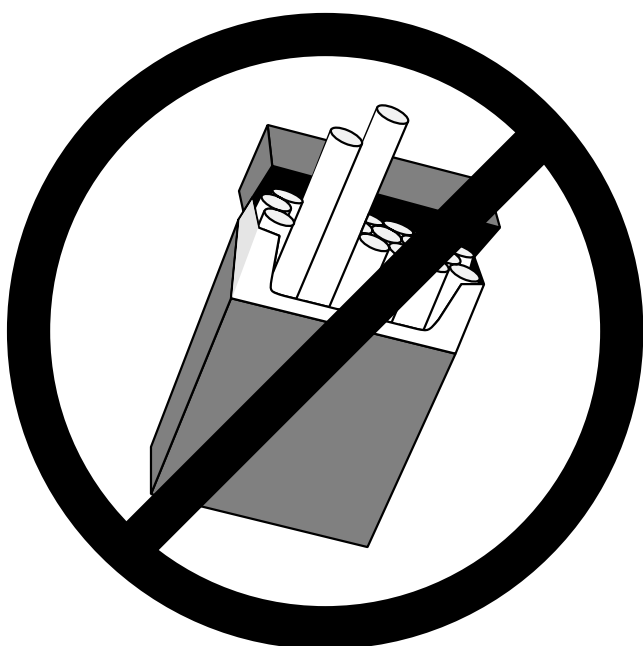


Most people are well enough to start doing more exercise straight away. But you should talk to your doctor first if you have:

- heart problems
- chest pains
- dizziness
- problems with your bones or joints

## Smoking

If you smoke, you can be at risk of serious diseases including cancer and heart disease. You should try to give up or at least cut down. Giving up smoking is hard work. You can get products to help you stop from the chemist, or you can get help from your doctor.



## Skincare

Lots of people with Down's syndrome have very dry skin. If your skin feels dry or looks flaky, don't use very hot water or bubble baths. You may need to put on a moisturising cream after washing.

If you have dandruff (flaky skin on top of your head) you can use an anti-dandruff shampoo.

When you go out in the sun, you should wear sun cream to stop you from getting sunburnt. Look for a cream for sensitive skin.

If you are worried about your skin, ask your doctor.

## Feet

Trim your toenails about once a week. Cut them straight across with nail clippers or scissors.

Some people get athlete's foot - itchy, flaky skin on their feet. If you get this it's important to wash your feet every day and dry them carefully, especially between the toes. You can also get products from the chemist to treat athlete's foot.

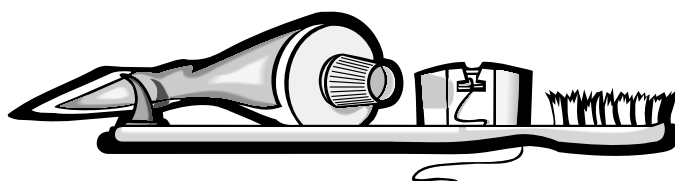
If you find it hard to cut your own nails you can get help from a chiropodist.

If you have heart problems or diabetes, you should see a chiropodist regularly.

## Teeth

To keep your teeth healthy:

- brush your teeth twice a day
- get a new toothbrush every 3 months
- don't have too many sweets or sugary drinks
- visit the dentist every six months



# Health Problems

Some health problems are more common in people with Down's syndrome, for example:

**Eye problems** - you may need to wear glasses

**Hearing problems** - you may not hear things so well

**Problems with your heart**

**Chest infections, coughs and colds**

**Diabetes**

**Thyroid problems**

It is also important to remember that some people with Down's syndrome do not have any health problems.

However, it is important that you go to see your doctor to have regular check ups so that you keep healthy. Doctors now know what medical problems someone with Down's syndrome can have. Many doctors have set up screening programmes, which means that they look for the early signs of an illness so that they can give the patient the right treatment to make them well before their illness becomes serious.

It is therefore important to visit your doctor sometimes when you feel very well just to check on things.

**Sometimes it is difficult to remember everything you want to ask the doctor when you have an appointment.**

## **TIPS**

Before your visit, make a list of the questions you want to ask the doctor. This way you can be sure you won't forget anything.

You may like to ask a member of your family or a carer to help you with this.

Kent says

**you may need help in making a doctor's appointment**



**Sometimes it is difficult to understand the advice the doctor is giving you or to remember what they said when you get home.**

**TIPS**

Ask your doctor to write things down so that you can go over it when you get home.

You may like to ask a member of your family or a carer to go through it with you.

**Sometimes doctors are very difficult to understand.**

**TIPS**

Don't be afraid to say you don't understand.

Ask them to explain their advice to you or to tell you again. After all, it is your body.



Luke says

**if you've got something catching, stay at home. Don't go to work or college**



**Sometimes it is difficult to get the doctor to understand the problems**

**TIP**

Ask someone to go with you who knows you well and can help explain the problems you are having.

**Sometimes you may not be happy with the advice a doctor gives you.**

**TIP**

You have the right to ask for another doctor's advice. This is called getting a second opinion.

**Sometimes you may be unhappy with the advice or the way your GP treats you.**

**TIP**

You have the right to change your GP and see someone else.

# Consent to treatment

Consent is about giving your permission for something to be done to you by a nurse or a doctor. It means that before they can do anything they must ask your permission and you have the right to say yes or no.

Before you say yes or no, ask the doctor or the nurse to give you information about what they want to do in a way that is easy for you to understand. The decision is up to you, no one else can say yes or no for you. Talk it through with the medical team and your friends or family who know you well. This will help you to decide to say yes or no - give consent.

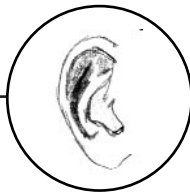
Sometimes, a doctor or a nurse may think that you do not understand enough to make the choice. They have the right to give you treatment that they think is best for you. Doctors and nurses jobs are to make people well or as comfortable as possible. This is why sometimes they make the choice about what is best for you.



# Who does what?

## **Audiologists**

help you with hearing problems



## **Cardiologists**

help with heart problems



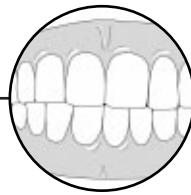
## **Chiropodists**

help you look after your feet



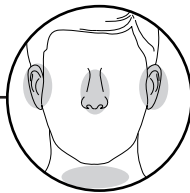
## **Dentists**

help you look after your teeth



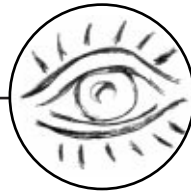
## **ENT specialists**

help you with ear, nose and throat problems



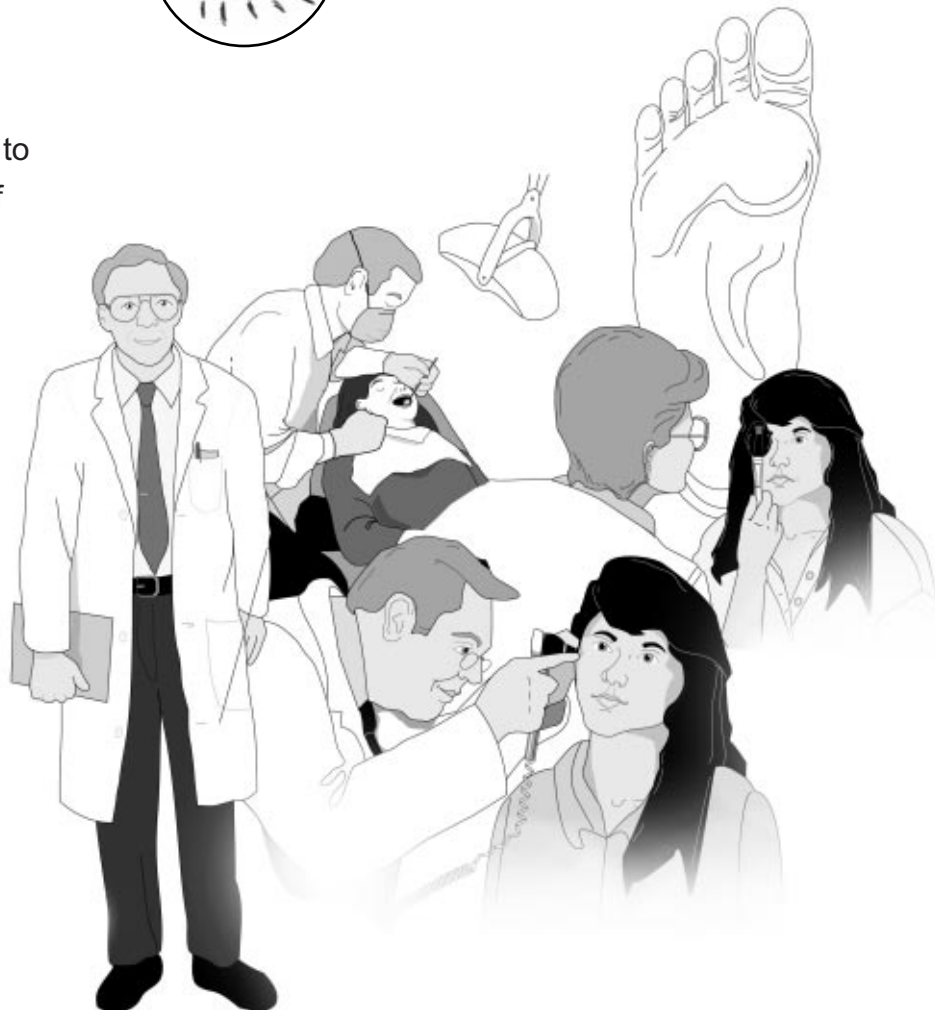
## **Ophthalmologists**

Help you with eye problems



## **General Practitioners (GPs)**

Your GP is often the first doctor you go to see when you have a health problem. If they cannot help, they will arrange for you to see a doctor who can, these doctors are often called specialists.



# Who said what?

Put the person with what they said. Look back in the book if you cannot remember.

We have started you off with the first line.

..... says

**breakfast is an important meal**

..... says

**Gardening is a good way to get some exercise**



KENT

..... says

**you may need help in making a doctor's appointment**



CHLOE

..... says

**if you drink,  
don't over do it**

..... says

**try not to snack  
between meals**



**JENNY**

..... says

**if you've got  
something  
catching, stay at  
home. Don't go to  
work or college**



**LUKE**

# Who does what?

Write the job name  
under the picture

**Audiologists**

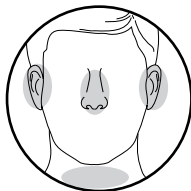
**Cardiologists**

**Chiropodists**

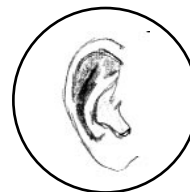
**Dentists**

**ENT specialists**

**Ophthalmologists**



**ENT specialists**



# Which Food group?

Write the food name under the picture

**Chocolate, Crisps  
and Sweets**

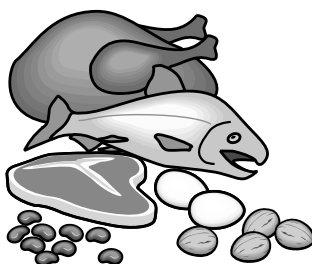
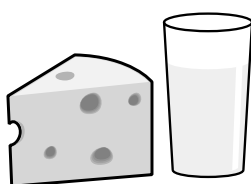
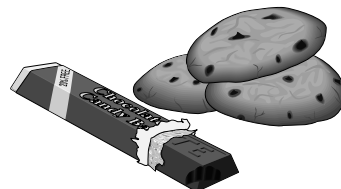
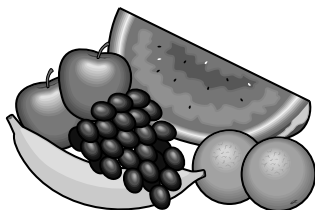
**Milk and  
Milk Products**

**Meat and  
Meat Alternatives**

**Vegetables**

**Fruits**

**Bread and Cereals**

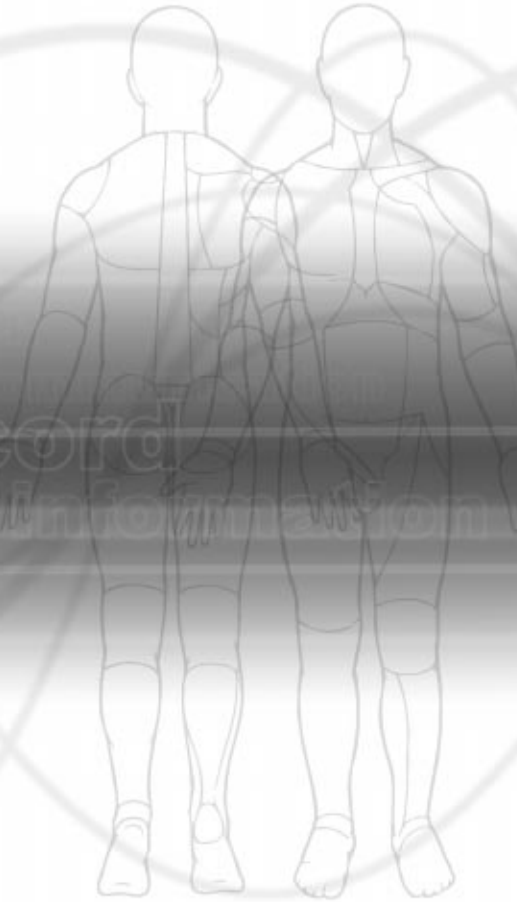


**Meat and Meat Alternatives**



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# Personal Health Record

This form is to keep important information about your health. This will help people to care for you properly if you get ill or have to go to hospital.

You might want to ask someone to help you fill in the form - maybe a friend, relative or helper. They might be able to help you remember things about your health as well.

You may need to change some of the information on this form from time to time. Before you start filling it in take some photocopies of the form so that you can use a new one each time.

# Personal Health Record

Date you filled in this form: .....

Name: .....

Date of birth: .....

Male/Female .....

Next of kin: .....

## Important information

What is your GP s name and address? .....

.....  
.....  
.....

Do you have any allergies? .....

.....  
.....

Do you need a special diet? .....

.....  
.....



# Personal Health Record

If you had to see a doctor, or go into hospital,  
is there anything else important you think they should know about you? .....

.....  
.....

Have you been in hospital before? .....

.....

Has anyone in your family had a serious illness? .....

.....

Has anyone close to you died? .....

.....

Do you have any problems with your health? If so, please write about it in the space below.  
How does it affect you? Is there anything you can do about it?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

# Personal Health Record

## Skills

These pages are to keep information about your skills, and things you like doing. If you are ill, you may find it harder to do these things. These pages will help you, and other people, to notice if you are getting ill, and when you are getting better. They will also help people to look after you if you become ill.

You may need to change some of the information on these pages from time to time.

## Communication

People communicate in different ways. They may use words, sign language, or pictures. Some people speak different languages. How do you usually let other people know what you are thinking or feeling? Please tick all the ways that you use:

Words?  What languages do you speak? .....

.....

Makaton?

Symbols?

Communication device?

Other?

I don't use any of these communication systems.

I let people know how I'm feeling by

.....

.....

.....

.....

# Personal Health Record

Sometimes it can be hard to tell other people what you are thinking or feeling.  
If you have problems with this, what helps you?

.....

## **Looking after yourself**

Please write down what help you need for these activities (if you don't need any, write 'none'.)

Getting dressed .....

Washing .....

Washing your clothes .....

Cooking .....

Managing your money .....

Shopping .....

Taking medication .....

Travelling to places you know, like work or college .....

.....

.....

Are there any other activities you need help with? .....

.....

.....

# Personal Health Record

## About yourself

Who else lives with you? .....

.....

.....

Who do you like to spend time with? .....

.....

What makes you happy? .....

.....

What makes you unhappy? .....

.....

What do you like doing? .....

.....

What don't you like doing? .....

.....

What else would you like people to know about you? .....

.....

.....



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