

Psychosocial Assessment Overview & Common Presentation Checklist

This checklist or “toolkit” is intended to support the health of adults with Down syndrome directly or through their caregivers. We encourage you to share this checklist with your medical provider. Per the GLOBAL Medical Care Guidelines for Adults with Down Syndrome, adults with Down syndrome should undergo a psychosocial assessment each year. A psychosocial assessment is an interview, usually performed by a social worker or psychologist, where they ask about the patient’s mental, physical, and emotional health factors. Below is a chart outlining the 3 basic areas of a psychosocial assessment, and the changes associated with those areas of functioning that may prompt a caregiver or parent to make a special appointment with a medical or behavioral professional such as a doctor or psychologist familiar with adults with Down syndrome.

3 Basic Areas of the Psychosocial Assessment:	Examples of things to notice in behavior, function, and psychosocial areas:	Things to Review with a Medical Professional:
Behavioral Factors	TAKE NOTICE OF CHANGES IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-talk • “Groove” behaviors (tendency towards sameness or repetition) • Personality • Ability to focus or pay attention • Activity level • Social motivation or engagement • Mood and/or temperament 	Type of Changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase or decrease of the number of times a behavior is displayed in self-talk, groove behaviors, etc • Increase or decrease of levels around focus, activities, social engagement, etc. • Start of new behaviors Behaviors that should be immediately addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-harm, Harm to others • Loss of interest in things they previously enjoyed Past psychological history (diagnosis and/or medication)
Functional - Adaptive Factors	TAKE NOTICE OF CHANGES IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social skills • Communication skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Receptive (Listening to others and understanding) ○ Expressive (Speaking or otherwise communicating to others) • Activities of daily living (ADLs) including bathing, dressing, eating, toileting • Sleep patterns/Sleep hygiene (bedroom and routines that promote consistent, uninterrupted sleep) • Strengths & weaknesses 	Types of Changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to learn new skills • Eating more or less (appetite changes) • Difficulty doing things they previously could do (or needing more support from others) • Confusion around familiar people and places • “Obsessive Slowness” (almost looks like intentionally moving in slow motion)
Psychosocial Factors	TAKE NOTICE OF CHANGES IN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/friends/support staff • Key relationships • Housing arrangement • School/occupation/vocation • Community involvement 	External influences that change the level of participation in activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in medication • Divorce, breakups, grief • Changes in routine Immediately report instances of trauma or abuse to police/child services and/or medical professionals, and seek supports

This tool is not intended to be diagnostic. Presentation of medical or mental health conditions for people with Down syndrome may be atypical. Similar signs and symptoms may be a consequence of multiple reasons, including different disease processes. Thus, the patient evaluation should include considerations of additional causes for any detected sign or symptom. The development of new and/or changes in signs or symptoms should prompt a comprehensive evaluation with your medical provider.

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Per the GLOBAL Medical Care Guidelines for Adults with Down Syndrome, mental health and medical health conditions can occur together, and behavior changes can often happen because of a medical condition(s). Here is a list of medical conditions you should review or rule out with your provider if you see behavior changes occur. This list is not a complete list and is meant to provide some direction only; you may need to consider other medical factors through discussion with your health care provider:

Common medical conditions that may look like psychiatric and behavioral symptoms in adults with Down syndrome and should be checked with a medical professional:	
1. Sleep Apnea	8. Sinus and respiratory infections
2. Gastrointestinal (Celiac, abdominal pain, GERD)	9. Constipation
3. Thyroid Disease	10. Dental Pain
4. Hearing impairment, including ear wax buildup	11. Seizures
5. Vision Impairment	12. Difficulty Swallowing
6. Urinary tract infection	13. Atlantoaxial Instability or spinal cord injury
7. Menstrual pain	14. Other pain (headaches, skin conditions, joint stiffness)

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