

# Most kids with Down's Syndrome (trisomy 21) have some physiological and behavioural differences that make it difficult to assess how sick they actually are.



## 1. Poor temp control:

may not develop a fever at all, or may be hypothermic instead

## 2. Weak immune system:

Infections that usually cause only minor illnesses can be dangerous to kids with DS. Amy (in the photo below) spent a week ventilated in PICU when she had chicken pox!

## 3. Mottle easily:

Kids with DS have poor control of SVR, and get mottled ("corn beefy") with temperature change as well as sepsis, making assessment tricky.

## 4. Co-morbidities common

Remember cardiac problems, GORD, coeliac and autism (& don't forget the drug history)

## 5. Leukaemia is more common

and may present atypically

## Top tips for triaging & treating



## kids with Down's Syndrome

## 6. Ask what's normal for this individual child

Assessing levels of alertness, responsiveness, tone etc. can all be difficult if you don't know the individual child at baseline. Ask parents: they know their child best!

## 7. Narrow tubes, thicker mucus

Kids with DS get more chest & ear infections, and generally produce more snot!

## 8. Explain and reassure

Kids with DS often have sensory processing difficulties and can be very wary of new sensations: BP cuffs and sats probes may be terrifying. Take time to explain and reassure.

## 9. Beware of atypical presentations of serious illness

Sepsis can present atypically (as well as leukaemia, see #5) - e.g. chest infections/pneumonia with sepsis presenting as D&V



## 10. Optimise communication strategies

Speech & language development lags behind understanding, so kids with DS often understand more than they can express. They're often great visual learners (but have poor short-term auditory memory and fluctuating hearing loss) so use sign, pictures and gestures. Speak slowly, clearly and maintain eye contact. Allow for sensory processing delay of several seconds: don't hurry a reply

# Don't panic! Just don't forget the extra chromosome