

Looking after your health in your adult years

As you get older, certain health conditions start to occur more often. Looking out for them now may prevent some of the complications of these conditions from happening later on. Having a regular check and discussion with your GP or specialist about your health and fitness is recommended. I would suggest that you get to know your local doctor or specialist well over a few visits, especially when you first meet. You could even help your GP look after your health by bringing up certain topics on the health of adults with Down syndrome. This is what this section is about - you getting to know your health.

Let me briefly tell you about the clinic for specialized healthcare of adults with Down syndrome which the DSAQ is sponsoring. The aim of this clinic is to help you live healthily into your adult years by looking after your health. The clinic is held at the Mater Staff Specialist Private Practice clinic at the Mater public hospital on the second Thursday of each month. The clinic goes all day, and each appointment is about one hour long.

When you see me for the first time, we spend nearly the whole hour just talking about you, what you do where you live, with what areas you may need assistance, how healthy and fit you are, how sick you have ever been, and what tablets you take. I must admit that I do ask a lot of questions and sometimes this is hard going. Usually, my patients come with their family members or carers to help but if you want to speak with me alone, this is fine too. I talk with you about getting some tests done, and how to do this.

At the second visit if you allow me, I give you a check up by listening to your heart and lungs and feeling your tummy, looking in your eyes and ears. You can ask me any questions too. At the end of the second appointment we put all that we have talked about into a summary list of health items and what we are going to do about these, and how to live more healthily. I write up a letter of what we talked about and send it to you and your local doctor to follow up. We usually also make an appointment to see each other down the track to see how things are going.

Before you decide if you want to come to me to look at your health with you, you might want to know what experience I have as a doctor. Well, I am a specialist doctor in what is called "Internal Medicine" and I also specialise in the health of adults with intellectual disability. This means that I have studied over many years all about the organs in our body such as the heart, lungs, bowel, glands, nerves, brain and muscles. I have also done a lot of extra study about body and health of adults with Down syndrome. I also see other adult patients at the hospital where I work (Princess Alexandra Hospital), and see patients with learning problems at the Mater clinics.

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