

Aging with Disabilities

There was a time when people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) did not get old; they died first. While the life expectancy for people with significant IDD is less than that of people without them, it has definitely increased from what it was years ago. This can be attributed to better healthcare and improvement in living conditions. The number of people with IDD over the age of 60 is expected to continue to grow.

With aging comes a whole new subset of health concerns.

With aging comes a whole new subset of health concerns—concerns that many people with IDD never lived long enough to experience. Screening procedures were often not considered in the past as the person's life expectancy was thought to be more limited by their disability than the condition for which they were to be screened. With longer lives comes the need for appropriate screening.

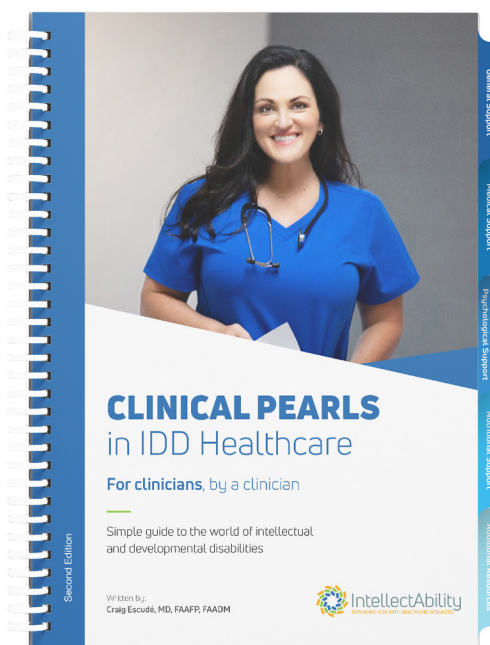
- Utilize the same screening recommendation for people with IDD as those without it
- Look for current screening recommendations for people with specific syndromes such as Down syndrome, fragile X, and Prader-Willi
- Encourage health habits like diet and exercise
- Manage pain from things like arthritis that are seen more often as people age. People with physical disabilities may experience joint pain earlier than others
- Monitor for the long-term adverse effects of medications including things that increase the risk of conditions like obesity, osteoporosis, tardive dyskinesia, and thyroid conditions
- Screen for dementia, especially in people with Down syndrome who tend to show signs earlier

- Help people remain as mobile as possible
- Consider hearing and vision-related changes associated with aging as these might show up as adverse behaviors because they can no longer hear or see well
- Facilitate community inclusion and participation as these issues are already challenging in people with IDD and often worsen as people age

Thanks for what you do in supporting healthy aging in people with IDD.

This IntellectAbility Resource Sheet is sourced from *Clinical Pearls in IDD Healthcare: Second Edition*, written by Craig Escudé, MD, FAAFP, FAADM, FAAIDD.

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