

Mattel Hopes to Teach Kids Real-World Lessons With Down Syndrome Barbie

Toymaker Mattel released a new Barbie doll with Down Syndrome on Tuesday, with physical features, clothing and accessories designed to represent what it's like to live with the condition.

Mattel collaborated with the National Down Syndrome Society to create the Barbie and ensure the doll accurately represents a person with Down syndrome, the company said.

"As the most diverse doll line on the market, Barbie plays an important role in a child's early experiences, and we are dedicated to doing our part to counter social stigma through play," said Mattel Executive Vice President and Global Head of Barbie & Dolls Lisa McKnight in a press release.

"We are proud to introduce a Barbie doll with Down syndrome to better reflect the world around us and further our commitment to celebrating inclusion through play," McKnight added.

The Barbie doll with Down syndrome is a part of Mattel's 2023 Fashionistas lineup, which also includes new dolls in a variety of body types, including a new Fashionista doll wearing braces and a Ken Fashionista doll with a prosthetic leg. The company describes the lineup as "an inclusive range" of dolls "designed to reflect the world kids see today."

Design features of the new Barbie were made under guidance from NDSS, Mattel said. In addition to portraying some physical characteristics of a person with Down syndrome, the Barbie's clothing and accessories carry special meaning.

The blue and yellow on the doll's dress, accompanied by

butterflies, represent symbols and colors associated with Down syndrome awareness. And the three chevrons on Barbie's necklace represent how people with Down syndrome have three copies of their 21st chromosome, Mattel said.

In addition, Barbie wears ankle foot orthotics, which some children with Down syndrome use.

"It was an honor working with Barbie on the Barbie doll with Down syndrome," NDSS President and CEO Kandi Pickard said in a press release. "This means so much for our community, who for the first time, can play with a Barbie doll that looks like them. This Barbie serves as a reminder that we should never underestimate the power of representation. It is a huge step forward for inclusion and a moment that we are celebrating."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal condition diagnosed in the U.S. today. About 6,000 babies are born across the country each year with Down syndrome, the CDC said.

The 2023 Fall Fashionistas dolls, including the Barbie doll with Down syndrome, are available in limited quantities online now and in-store this summer and fall at major retailers.

Reprinted with permission from . Copyright © 2023 The Christian Broadcasting Network Inc. All rights reserved.