



SUPER S.T.A.R.S.

Super Supportive Teaching for Achieving Remarkable Success
CHILD RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Founders' Foreword



A Warm Welcome to Superstars!

Dear SUPER S.T.A.R.S Family, it brings us immense joy and pride to share the first edition of the SUPER S.T.A.R.S Child Research & Development Center newsletter—a milestone that reflects not just our journey but the collective hope, resilience, and trust of the families we are privileged to serve.

SUPER S.T.A.R.S was born from a deeply personal place—a commitment to ensuring that every child, especially those who are neurodiverse, has access to thoughtful, evidence-based, and compassionate care. What started as a dream rooted in love and necessity has now transformed into a vibrant center of excellence where clinicians, parents, and community leaders come together to support children holistically.

This first volume is more than an update—it is a celebration of every child's progress, every family's trust, and every volunteer and professional's dedication. From free developmental screenings and educational webinars to partnerships with university departments and clinical experts, we are constantly evolving to meet the needs of our families with innovation and empathy. Our summer camp, clinical workshops, and growing collaborations reaffirm what we have always believed: when we empower parents and involve them in every step of the journey, children thrive.

Every visitor, whether a doctor, therapist, or academic leader, has echoed a common sentiment—they see a rare blend of science, heart, and purpose at SUPER S.T.A.R.S. This is not just a center—it is a movement toward transforming care for children with diverse developmental needs.

As we continue to grow, our promise to you remains unwavering: to listen deeply, learn relentlessly, and lead with compassion. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey. Together, we are creating a future where every child is seen, supported, and celebrated.

Warm regards,

Sravani & Ravi Mangunoori (Founders)





Centre Tours and Partnerships

We had the pleasure of hosting several visitors who toured our facility. Dr. Sujay Galen, Assistant Dean at Georgia State University (GSU), visited us and helped facilitate a conversation about potential collaboration with GSU students for fieldwork at Superstars. We are hopeful about this partnership moving forward.



Dr. Sonia V. George, Developmental Pediatrician, who has been a great supporter of our mission, also visited our center. She was impressed with our holistic approach and clinical protocols. She graciously invited our team to observe her clinic and learn from her evaluation process. We consider this opportunity a valuable learning experience for everyone involved.

Miss Quinn, Director of Developmental Disabilities Services at AVITA, also visited Superstars. She was very pleased with what we accomplished and has offered her full support in helping families. She was gracious enough to conduct a workshop on AVITA family support services on June 21st at SUPER STARS. We are excited to have her on board as part of our vision.



We also had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Jagan C, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, who visited our facility and was impressed with our thought process and the way we brought everything together on the floor. Dr. C mentioned that he had been searching for a center like ours for years and could clearly see this vision coming to life in our facility.

We were honored to have Dr. Badrinath Donti, a leading pediatrician from Maruti Pediatrics, Cary, North Carolina, along with his wife Ms. Veena Donti, visit us.



They extended their full support and blessings to Superstars, recognizing the positive impact we are making in the community. We are grateful for their encouragement and look forward to building a lasting relationship.

Dr. Bipin Krishna, a child, adolescent and adult Psychiatrist a clinical psychiatrist, also visited Superstars and was overwhelmed by the clinical protocols and standards we've established. He was particularly taken by surprise at our approach to involving parents in the therapeutic process, which he believes is crucial for the overall success of the children we work with.

Webinars and Parent Empowerment

Our vision to empower parents continues through our ongoing webinars. We recently hosted notable experts such as Dr. Vivek Jogani, a renowned Pedodontist from India, who spoke on the importance of oral structures and their impact on feeding. Dr. Sanjay Gotikar, a nutritionist, also shared insights into the role of nutrition and supplementation for children with developmental delays. We are thrilled to announce that these webinars will continue every Saturday, covering various developmental topics.

In addition to this, we conducted live demonstrations highlighting the role of reflexes in feeding, providing practical learning for our community.

Summer Camp Success

Our highly anticipated Summer Camp, set to run for two weeks starting June 16th, has received an overwhelming response!



We had 30 registrations, which include both volunteers and neurodivergent children. Our camp is designed to provide individualized care and support to all attendees.

We've made sure our volunteers are well equipped to handle the children's needs. All volunteers will receive free CPR and First Aid training, provided by the American Health Association. They will also be trained to effectively recognize and treat adult emergencies in the critical first minutes until emergency medical services personnel arrive and manage developmental delays ensuring they are well-prepared to offer effective assistance throughout the camp.

Successful Evaluations and Family Feedback



Our ongoing evaluations have been an eye-opening experience for both our team and the families we serve. Parents have expressed their gratitude for the detailed evaluations and the care with which we've observed their children in different contexts. One family shared that this was their first time experiencing such an in-depth evaluation process, and they were deeply pleased with the insights and recommendations we provided.

Looking Ahead

We are incredibly grateful for all the support we have received so far and are excited about the future of Superstars. Stay tuned for more updates on upcoming webinars, workshops, and community events.



*Thank you for being a part of the Superstars family.
Together, we are making a lasting impact.*

“Empowering Parents: A Holistic Approach to Addressing Feeding Challenges in Children” Issue: May 2025

Feeding difficulties in children can manifest in various ways and may be attributed to multiple underlying causes. These challenges are especially prevalent in children with neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other developmental delays. The root causes of these challenges are often multifactorial, stemming from primitive reflex retention, oral-motor dysfunction, sensory processing issues, and nutritional imbalances. At Superstars Child Development and Research Centre, our mission is to provide parents with the knowledge and strategies they need to support their children through these difficulties. Our expert series covers three primary areas that influence feeding success: primitive reflexes, personalized nutrition, and orofacial care.



Understanding these interconnected factors will allow parents and caregivers to take a holistic approach to address their child's feeding challenges, leading to better feeding outcomes and overall development.

1. Primitive Reflexes and Their Impact on Feeding Development

Primitive reflexes are automatic, involuntary movements that develop in response to stimuli. These reflexes are critical for survival and early development. In infancy, they serve as foundational movements that help babies

develop basic motor control and sensory integration. These reflexes should integrate into more advanced voluntary movements during the first year of life, enabling more sophisticated motor tasks like walking, feeding, and fine motor coordination.

However, when these reflexes do not integrate, they can remain active beyond infancy, interfering with motor development, sensory processing, and most importantly, feeding.

Dr. Samraj Gaddam, Clinical Director at Superstars Child Development and Research Centre, highlighted that retained primitive reflexes are one of the leading causes of feeding challenges. These reflexes can affect a child's ability to latch, chew, swallow, and self-feed, which are all essential aspects of normal feeding development.

Key Primitive Reflexes Impacting Feeding

Rooting Reflex



The rooting reflex is an involuntary movement in which an infant turns their head and opens their mouth when their cheek or corner of the mouth is stroked. This reflex is crucial for helping infants latch onto the breast or bottle for feeding. However, when this reflex is retained beyond the infant stage, it can create difficulties with mouth positioning and self-feeding.

Impact on Feeding:

- Difficulty latching during breastfeeding or bottle-feeding.
- Challenges in self-feeding and transitioning to solid foods.
- Increased risk of gagging or choking during mealtimes.

Integration Strategies:

- Gently stimulate the cheek or mouth to encourage appropriate mouth positioning.
- Practice feeding in an upright position to improve oral motor coordination and reduce choking risks.
- Gradually introduce new textures and flavors of food to help the child adapt to different eating experiences.

Sucking Reflex

The sucking reflex is essential for an infant's ability to latch onto the breast or bottle and feed. It involves a rhythmic movement of the tongue and mouth, helping the infant draw milk. However, when this reflex persists beyond the expected developmental stage, it can prevent a child from transitioning to eating solids and lead to oral motor dysfunction.

Impact on Feeding:

- Inefficient sucking patterns that affect feeding efficiency.
- Difficulty transitioning to solids due to poor oral coordination.
- Trouble swallowing properly and handling textures.

Integration Strategies:

- Introduce chewy toys and chewing exercises to strengthen the muscles used in sucking and swallowing.
- Encourage the child to use a sippy cup to improve sucking patterns while practicing transitioning to more solid foods.
- Use soft-tipped spoons and gradually increase texture complexity as the child becomes comfortable.



Palmar Grasp Reflex

The palmar grasp reflex is triggered when an object is placed in the palm of a baby's hand, causing the baby to grasp the object tightly. This reflex is helpful for early grasping and holding but can interfere with the development of fine motor skills needed for tasks like holding utensils.



Impact on Feeding:

- Difficulty using utensils such as spoons or forks for self-feeding.
- Weak hand coordination, which may lead to spilling or not being able to grip food properly.

Integration Strategies:

- Encourage hand-strengthening activities such as playdough, picking up small objects, and finger painting to help integrate the reflex and build fine motor skills.
- Gradually introduce adaptive utensils with larger handles to help the child learn to grip them effectively.
- Provide finger foods (e.g., small pieces of soft fruit or vegetables) to encourage the child to practice picking up food and feeding themselves.

Asymmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (ATNR)

The ATNR reflex is seen when a baby turns their head to one side, causing the arm on that side to extend and the opposite arm to bend. This reflex is vital for early visual tracking and hand-eye coordination.



When retained, it can affect head control and hinder a child's ability to sit up and feed properly

Impact on Feeding:

- Difficulty with postural control during meals, affecting balance and coordination.
- Inability to self-feed or use utensils effectively.

Integration Strategies:

- Encourage tummy time and gentle head-turning exercises to improve neck strength and coordination.
- Ensure the child is properly supported during mealtimes to encourage upright sitting posture.
- Engage in ball tosses or reaching activities that require the child to turn their head and arms to develop visual-motor coordination.

Symmetrical Tonic Neck Reflex (STNR)



The STNR reflex involves movement in the arms and legs when the head is tilted forward or backward. It is critical for the development of postural control and balance. Retained STNR can make it difficult for a child to sit upright during meals and maintain the balance necessary for effective chewing and swallowing.

Impact on Feeding:

- Difficulty sitting up properly during meals.
- Problems with coordination during feeding, such as struggling with chewing and swallowing.

Integration Strategies:

- Encourage crawling and rolling exercises to develop core strength and balance.
- Use seated postural support to ensure the child is sitting properly and not slouching during meals.
- Incorporate core strengthening exercises such as bouncing on a therapy ball or sitting on a wobble cushion.

2. Personalized Nutrition for Feeding Success

Dr. Sanjay Gotikar, a certified nutritionist, joined our expert series to provide parents with the tools they need to develop a personalized nutrition plan for children with feeding difficulties. Nutrition plays an essential role in the development of motor control, oral- motor coordination, and overall growth. Children with autism or Down syndrome often have heightened sensory sensitivities and gastrointestinal issues that can make eating difficult. Therefore, personalized nutrition is vital to meet their specific needs and support their overall health.

Nutritional Focus:

- **Macronutrients:** Proper intake of proteins, fats, carbohydrates, and fiber is essential for growth, energy, and cognitive development. Dr. Sanjay emphasized balanced meals for children, with one gram of protein per kilogram of body weight recommended daily to support proper development.
- **Micronutrients:** Magnesium is critical for over 350 biochemical reactions in the body. Dr. Sanjay explained that magnesium deficiency can manifest as symptoms like muscle cramps, poor sleep, and bladder control issues. Magnesium can be found in foods like spinach, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.
- **Food Sensitivities:** For children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), sensory sensitivities to food textures and flavors are common. Dr. Sanjay recommended gradual food introduction, starting with familiar textures, and slowly incorporating new foods to encourage a broader range of acceptable textures.

Healthy Eating Tips:

- 5 servings of fruits and 4 servings of vegetables daily will improve digestion, nutrient absorption, and provide essential



- Minimize processed foods, particularly sugary snacks and junk food, to prevent spikes in blood sugar levels and ensure optimal health.
- Smoothies are an excellent way to add extra fruits, vegetables, and protein (e.g., nut butter, protein powders) for children who struggle with solid food textures.
- Avoid mixing calcium-rich foods (like dairy) with iron-rich foods (like spinach) to optimize nutrient absorption.

3. Orofacial Care: Assessing and Addressing Feeding Barriers

Dr. Vivek Jogani, a leading pediatric dentist, shared the importance of orofacial evaluations to identify structural or functional problems that could interfere with feeding.

Issues such as tongue-tie, lip-tie, misaligned jaws, or weak oral-motor skills can all contribute to feeding difficulties. Identifying these issues early can prevent long-term challenges and help children develop healthy feeding skills.

Key Areas of Focus in Orofacial Evaluations:



- **Tongue-Tie (Ankyloglossia):** This condition restricts the tongue's movement, making breastfeeding or bottle-feeding challenging. A frenectomy procedure is often recommended to release the tight tissue, allowing the tongue to move more freely.

Lip-Tie: Like tongue-tie, a lip-tie restricts the upper lip, which can prevent a proper latch and make feeding more difficult. Frenectomy is also used to release this tissue.



Jaw Misalignment: Misaligned jaws (overbites or underbites) can impact chewing and swallowing. Dr. Jogani emphasized the importance of early orthodontic evaluations to address these concerns before they become more problematic.

Tips for Parents:

1. **Gradual Desensitization:** If your child has oral sensitivities, begin by using playful activities like brushing their teeth with a soft brush or using a toy to mimic dentist visits.
2. **Proper Positioning During Meals:** Make sure your child is seated upright with their back supported to maintain posture during feeding. This promotes proper chewing and reduces choking risks.
3. **Use Adaptive Utensils:** For children struggling with hand-eye coordination, use adaptive spoons, forks, and cups with handles that are easy for small hands to grip.

Conclusion

Feeding challenges in children can be complex and multifactorial, but by addressing primitive reflex retention, nutritional deficiencies, and oral-motor dysfunctions, parents can improve their child's ability to feed effectively. By taking a holistic approach - addressing reflex integration, nutrition, and orofacial care - parents can help children overcome their feeding difficulties and achieve better health, growth, and development.

At Superstars Child Development and Research Centre, we are committed to providing parents with the guidance and resources needed to navigate these challenges. We work closely with families to create individualized care plans that ensure children receive the support they need to thrive.

A Note from the Clinical Director's Desk

As we reflect on the journey of Superstars, we are filled with gratitude for the incredible progress we've made in supporting children and families. From the successful launch of our free weekly screenings to forming meaningful partnerships with experts like Dr. Sujay Gallon, Dr. Sonia George, Dr. Jagan C, and Miss Quinn, we have seen overwhelming support and growth. Feedback from families and professionals, including Dr. Bipin and Dr. Badrinath Donti, continues to reaffirm the significance of our holistic approach and the active involvement of parents in therapy.



This first volume, edition 1 of our newsletter marks an exciting milestone in our ongoing journey. In this edition, we are proud to feature our first educational blog, "A Holistic Approach to Addressing Feeding Challenges in Children." This blog explores effective strategies for supporting children facing feeding difficulties, emphasizing a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. We plan to continue featuring such insightful content in future newsletters, providing families with expert advice on various developmental and therapeutic topics.

Our summer camp and ongoing webinars have been a great success, helping empower families and providing our team with the tools they need to offer exceptional care. A special note of thanks to Dustin Donaldson, Director of Behavior Sciences, Lauren Foster, Director of the SLP Department, and Jennifer Harris, Head SLP for their unwavering support and leadership. We would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Sravya Gunda and Mr. Sandeep Karnati for their continued support and dedication to our mission.

As we look to the future, Sravani, Ravi, and I remain dedicated to our mission of improving the lives of the children and families we serve. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has been part of this journey.

"Together, we create a brighter future for every child."

Thank you for your continued trust and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samraj J. Gaddam". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Clinical Director

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