



#SwasthNariSashaktParivar



SAMPADA

Strength • Aspiration • Mother's
Resilience • Progress • Acceptance
Determination and Affection

मां का धैर्य, संतान की प्रगति ।

(Mother's resilience leads to the child's progress.)

ON THE OCCASION OF
**Swasth Nari Sashakt
Parivar Abhiyan**

by

**DEPT. OF PAEDIATRICS
AND CDEIC, AIIMS GUWAHATI**



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Preface



Dear Mothers and Families,

It is with great joy and a deep sense of purpose that I present this booklet on the occasion of SAMPADA, an initiative of AIIMS Guwahati under the larger umbrella of the “Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan” being observed from 17th September to 2nd October 2025.

The name SAMPADA itself carries a powerful meaning. It stands for:

• S – Strength • A – Aspiration • M – Mother’s Resilience • P – Progress • A – Acceptance • D – Determination • A – Affection

These words are not just letters, but values that every mother represents. They reflect the courage, patience, and unconditional love mothers show in nurturing their children, especially those with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD). Through SAMPADA, we wish to honour mothers, empower them with knowledge, and give them the support they need to raise their children with confidence and hope.

The **Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan** is a visionary program launched in line with the thoughts of our Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji. His vision emphasizes that when women are healthy, empowered, and supported, the entire family and society benefits. The campaign focuses on strengthening women’s health, nutrition, and emotional well-being, which in turn creates stronger families and a stronger nation. This initiative highlights the truth that women are the backbone of family resilience, and their empowerment directly contributes to the nation’s progress.

At AIIMS Guwahati, we fully align with this vision through **SAMPADA**. By focusing on mothers of children with NDD, we aim to provide comprehensive care that includes medical support, psychological counselling, therapy guidance, and family education. Our belief is simple: if mothers are supported, children thrive. This is the foundation of resilient families and a flourishing future.

SAMPADA is not only a program of lectures and health activities, but a heartfelt movement. It brings together a team of paediatricians, child psychiatrist, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists, and special educators — all working as one family with the mothers. We focus on topics like managing stress, improving maternal nutrition, understanding child development, and learning how small efforts at home can create big changes in a child’s life.

For mothers, this journey can sometimes feel heavy and overwhelming. But with the right guidance, you can discover new ways to help your child grow, communicate better, learn life skills, and enjoy simple moments of happiness. You are not alone. AIIMS Guwahati, through the Child development and early intervention Centre (CDEIC), stands beside you at every step.

As the Executive Director of AIIMS Guwahati, I want to reassure every mother reading this: your resilience is your child’s greatest strength. Together, through SAMPADA and with the spirit of the Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan, we can build healthier, happier, and empowered families.

With warm regards and best wishes,

Prof. (Col.) Ashok Puranik
Executive Director, AIIMS Guwahati

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About Comprehensive Child Development and Early Intervention Centre (CDEIC) at AIIMS Guwahati

By: Dr. Jaya Shankar Kaushik, Additional Professor and Head, Department of Pediatrics and CDEIC

Dear Parents,

Raising a child with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDDs) is not easy. Many families face difficulties such as late diagnosis, lack of specialists, and the need to travel far for therapy and treatment. This is especially true in the North-East of India, where health facilities are scattered and parents often have to visit different places for doctors, tests, and therapy. This not only causes delays in treatment but also brings financial and emotional stress to families.

To solve this problem, AIIMS Guwahati has established the Comprehensive Child Development and Early Intervention Centre (CDEIC). The word comprehensive means "complete" — and that is exactly what we want to provide: complete care for your child, all under one roof.

What is CDEIC?

A CDEIC is a special centre where many experts work together to take care of children with NDDs. Instead of parents running from one clinic to another, here all the services are available in one place. This makes care faster, easier, and less stressful for families.

Who will help your child in CDEIC?

- Developmental Pediatricians and Pediatric Neurologists – doctors who check your child's development, behavior, and brain health.
- Psychologists and Child Psychiatrists – who assess learning, emotions, and behavior, and give therapy when needed.
- Therapists:
 - o Occupational Therapists (OTs) – help your child with daily skills, hand use, and sensory issues.
 - o Physiotherapists (PTs) – improve movement, posture, and balance.
 - o Speech and Language Therapists (SLPs) – support speech, language, communication, and even feeding difficulties.
- Special Educators – guide children in learning and help in preparing individual education plans.
- Diagnostic Units – for tests like hearing, vision, EEG, and other important check-ups.
- Social Workers and Developmental Therapists – support families with counselling, early stimulation programs, and connect you to government schemes.

Why is CDEIC important for you?

- One roof, many solutions – No need to run to multiple places for therapy and diagnosis.
- Faster care – Early identification and early therapy improve your child's future.
- Emotional support – Counselling for parents reduces stress and gives you confidence.
- Affordable care – Being part of AIIMS, services are linked with national health programs, so families from all backgrounds can benefit.
- Future-oriented – The centre also works on training, research, and telehealth, so even families in far-off villages can get help.

Our Promise

Every child is unique, and every child has potential. The CDEIC is here to ensure that no child is left behind just because of where they are born or because of financial problems. We believe that with early intervention, therapy, and family support, children with NDDs can learn, grow, and live fulfilling lives.

Dear parents, you are not alone in this journey. The CDEIC at AIIMS Guwahati is your partner in care. Together, we can build a brighter, healthier, and more inclusive future for every child.

With warm regards,
Dr. Jaya Shankar Kaushik

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“Resilient mother radiant families”

Stress management and mental health support for the mothers of children with neuro developmental disorders (NDD)

Dr. V. Vishnupriya

Assistant Professor (Psychiatry)(CDEIC)

Introduction

Raising a child with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD), particularly autism spectrum disorder, presents profound emotional, psychological, and social challenges for mothers who often serve as the primary caregivers. The diagnosis itself is frequently accompanied by shock, despair, and uncertainty about the child's future, which can gradually evolve into persistent stress, depression, and anxiety. Mothers frequently find themselves navigating an overwhelming caregiving role—managing daily routines, advocating for educational opportunities, and addressing behavioural challenges—while simultaneously coping with marital strain, financial hardships, and diminished social participation.

In addition to the internal psychological burden, societal stigma and cultural misconceptions further exacerbate their struggles. In many contexts, mothers are unfairly blamed for their child's condition, perceived as victims of fate, or even socially excluded. Such attitudes often lead to isolation, guilt, and emotional exhaustion.

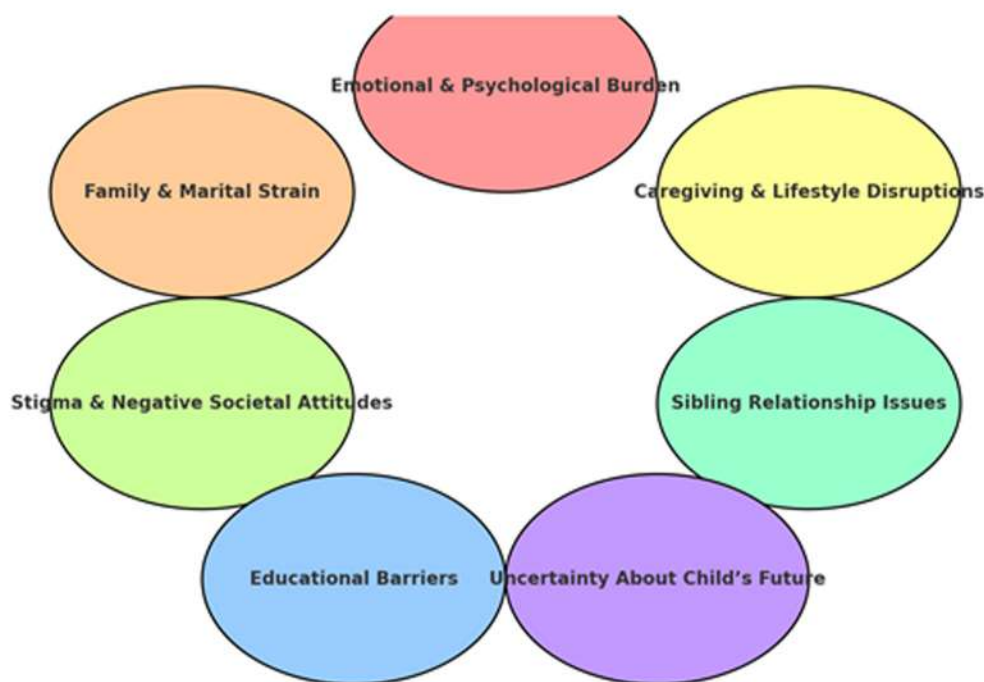
Common problems faced by the mothers of children with neurodevelopmental needs

The major domains of problems faced by mothers of children with neurodevelopmental needs (specifically autism, from the article), summarized as clear points for easy understanding:

- Emotional and Psychological Strain
 - o Shock, despair, sadness, and feeling overwhelmed after diagnosis.
 - o Persistent stress, depression, and hopelessness about their child's future.
- Family and Marital Strain
 - o Difficulty balancing attention between the autistic child, spouse, and other children.
 - o Marital conflicts, with some mothers experiencing divorce.
 - o Limited involvement of fathers, leaving mothers with the primary caregiving burden.
- Daily Care and Lifestyle Challenges
 - o Managing hectic schedules, overprotection, and constant vigilance.
 - o Mothers often forced to leave jobs → financial difficulties.
 - o Loss of social life and community participation, leading to isolation.
- Community and Societal Attitudes
 - o Negative community perceptions, stigma, and exclusion.
 - o Blaming mothers (e.g., child's autism seen as divine punishment or family curse).
 - o Some positive experiences with empathetic communities, but mostly discrimination and rejection.
- Sibling Relationships
 - o Many siblings showed negative attitudes toward their autistic brother/sister.
 - o Added emotional burden on mothers.
- Educational Barriers
 - o Difficulty enrolling children in schools due to lack of trained teachers and resources.
 - o Financial strain from needing private schools or hiring personal assistants.
 - o Attitudinal barriers from school management and peers.
- Future Uncertainty
 - o Anxiety about children's ability to achieve literacy, independence, and careers.
 - o Mixed hopes: some mothers wish for cure through spiritual means, while most hope for functional independence and community integration

Figure 1

Domains of Problems Faced by Mothers of Children with Neurodevelopmental Needs



The key **mental health issues faced by mothers of children with neurodevelopmental disorders (autism, in this study)**, listed in bullet points for clarity:

- **Emotional Distress**

- o Persistent sadness, despair, and hopelessness after diagnosis.
- o Emotional fatigue from constant caregiving demands.
- o Frustration due to disrupted parent-child interactions.

- **Psychological Strain**

- o Depression and feelings of worthlessness.
- o Anxiety about their child's future.
- o Episodes of suicidal thoughts or desire not to live (reported in some mothers).

- **Loneliness and Isolation**

- o Acute loneliness due to being the sole caregiver.
- o Emotional disconnection from spouses, leading to marital strain.
- o Social withdrawal because of lack of supportive networks.

- **Stigma-Related Stress**

- o Internalized guilt and self-blame (believing they caused the child's condition).
- o Shame due to community blaming mothers for giving birth to a "flawed" child.
- o Fear of social judgment, leading some to hide their child's condition.

- **Role Overload and Burnout**

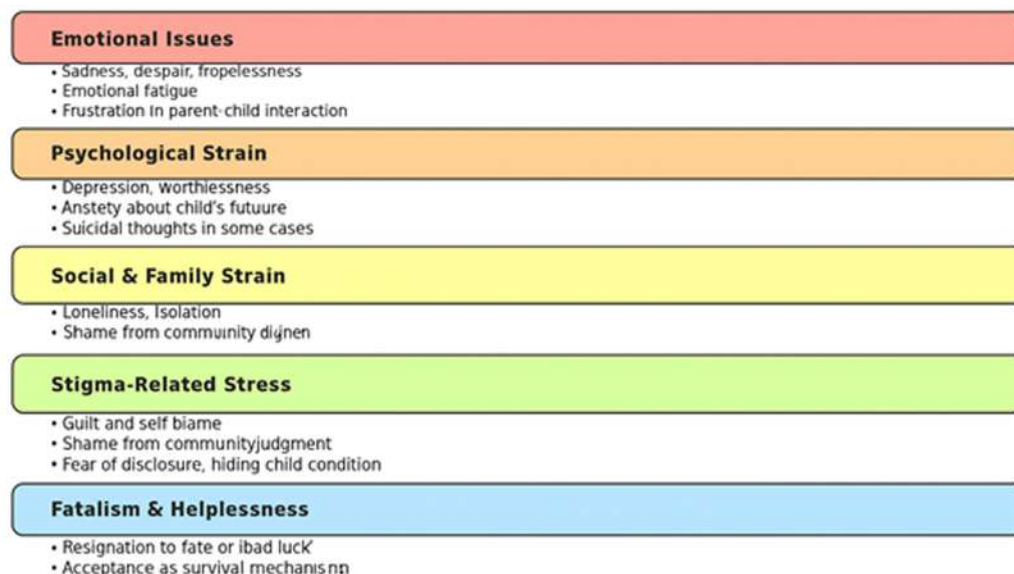
- o Physical exhaustion from 24/7 caregiving.
- o Stress from quitting jobs and sacrificing personal aspirations.
- o Loss of balance between caregiving, personal identity, and family life.

- **Fatalism and Helplessness**

- o Psychological resignation to “bad luck” or fate as a coping mechanism.
- o Acceptance framed as survival, but contributing to emotional burden

Figure -2

Mental Health Issues Faced by Mothers of Children with NDD



Society's perception of children with neurodevelopmental needs (CWSN/children with special needs):

- **Limited Understanding and Awareness**

- o Many people equate children with special needs only with visible disabilities like blindness, deafness, mutism, hyperactivity, or autism.
- o Broader categories such as giftedness, cerebral palsy, or learning difficulties are less recognized by the public

- **Bullying and Negative Behaviours**

- o Children with NDD often face bullying, both verbal and physical, mainly from peers.
- o Bullying responses differ by gender – boys and girls with special needs experience and react differently.
- o Bullying stems from poor understanding among parents, teachers, and the wider community.

- **Stigma and Misconceptions**

- o Some communities blame or view these children as “different” or “flawed.”
- o Misconceptions lead to social distancing and exclusion.
- o Parents may feel shame and hide their child's condition.

- **Lack of Social Programs and Support**

- o Communities generally lack structured programs or inclusive activities for children with special needs.
- o Facilities and infrastructure (like special access, inclusive schools) are either absent or poorly socialized.

- **Community Responses**

- o Mixed responses: some people show pity but don't know how to interact; others avoid direct contact.
- o A few treat children with NDD as equals and attempt inclusion in play or communication.

- **Educational Gaps**

- o Need for more inclusive schools and formal institutions that integrate special needs children with mainstream students.
- o Current educational opportunities for CWSN remain limited.

- **Hopes and Expectations of Society**

- o Better public awareness and information through official or informal channels.
- o Inclusive education systems that allow mainstreaming.
- o Facilities and resources to improve accessibility and integration.

In summary, society's perception of children with NDD is shaped by limited awareness, bullying and stigma, inadequate support systems, and inconsistent community responses. However, there is also a growing hope for inclusivity, better education, and social acceptance.

Figure 3

Society's Perception of Children with NDD (CWSN)





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Coping and adaptation techniques used by mothers of children with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDD):

Self-Coping / Adaptation Skills by the mothers

Social Support–Based Coping

Seeking help from relatives, friends, neighbours, and support groups
Joining parent networks, therapy groups, or school communities

Cognitive / Emotional Strategies

- Reframing: Redefining stressful events in a more positive or manageable way
- Acceptance of the child's condition and adjusting expectations
- Social support factors
- Positive thinking, focusing on small achievements, gratitude practices

Spiritual and Religious Coping

- Praying, seeking guidance from religious leaders, or engaging in faith-based practices

Mobilizing Family Support

- Engaging spouse, siblings, or extended family to share caregiving responsibilities

Problem-Focused Coping

- Actively searching for treatment options, therapies, and professional advice

social support factors

- Developing structured routines and schedules
- Learning new caregiving skills, educational resources, or behavioural techniques

Emotion-Focused Coping

- Venting feelings, avoidance, or minimizing emotional distress
- Passive appraisal (accepting problems without overreacting)

Resilience-Building

- Strengthening self-confidence and optimism resilience
- Developing empathy and constructive relationships resilience
- Viewing challenges as opportunities to learn new skills

Lifestyle and Health Adaptations

- Balancing caregiving with self-care (diet, sleep, relaxation)
- Engaging in physical activity or stress-reducing hobbies

Figure 3

Coping skills adapted by the mothers



Various popular Therapies for Mothers of Children with NDD

• **Dance/Movement Therapy (DMT)**
dance

- o Uses body movement and improvisational dance as therapy.
- o Significantly reduces parenting stress, depression, and anxiety in mothers of children with ASD.
- o Enhances emotional expression, body awareness, and relaxation.

• **Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) & Reality Therapy**
Reality therapy

- o Both effective in reducing anxiety in mothers of children with autism.
- o Reality Therapy (based on Choice Theory) showed greater impact than CBT.
- o Focuses on responsible decision-making, self-control, and meeting psychological needs (belonging, love, survival, freedom, power).

Figure 4 Reality ther



• **Educational Interventions**

- o Structured programs to provide knowledge about child's condition (e.g., Down Syndrome and children with other comorbidities like epilepsy).
- o Improves psychological well-being, coping, and caregiving practices of mothers.
- o Helps mothers manage child behaviour, communication, and daily challenges.

• **Humour-Based Coping / Resilience Training**

Investigation of the Relationship

- o Humour strengthens psychological resilience and reduces stress.
- o Promotes positive communication and better coping with challenges.
- o Shown to be a protective factor against emotional exhaustion.

• **Support & Psychoeducation Programs (Experiences of Mothers with ADHD Children)**

- o Mothers emphasized the need for peer support, counselling, and awareness programs.
- o Highlighted the importance of stress management workshops and psychoeducation tailored for caregivers.

In summary, effective interventions include dance/movement therapy, CBT, reality therapy, educational interventions, humour-based resilience training, and structured support/psychoeducation programs. Together, they improve mothers' mental health, coping ability, and resilience while reducing stress and anxiety.

Figure 5 Various therapy options for mothers of children with NDD



Conclusion

Mothers of children with neurodevelopmental disorders carry an extraordinary burden that extends beyond daily caregiving to encompass emotional, psychological, social, and financial challenges. Despite these struggles, their resilience and capacity for adaptation highlight an enduring strength that sustains families and shapes children's progress. By acknowledging their mental health needs and providing structured interventions—such as therapeutic support, psychoeducation, resilience training, and community awareness programs—we can create systems that not only ease maternal stress but also foster healthier family dynamics. Supporting mothers is, in essence, an investment in the well-being of the entire family and the broader community. Truly, when mothers are resilient, families become radiant.



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Empowered Mothers, Flourishing Future

By: Dr. Murchana Khound, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics

Dear Mothers

You are the first teacher, the first protector, and the strongest guide for your child. Your care, your strength, and your health directly shape the health, growth, and future of your little one. This is especially true when it comes to your child's brain development. Science has shown us that the wellbeing of mothers — physical, emotional, and mental — plays a key role in determining how a child learns, grows, and interacts with the world. That is why caring for yourself during pregnancy and beyond is not just important for you, but it is the foundation for your child's brighter tomorrow.

Why Your Health Matters for Your Child's Brain

Many parents think that child development begins after birth, but the truth is that it starts much earlier — even before you realize you are pregnant. A baby's brain begins forming as early as the third week of pregnancy. This means that every choice you make, from the food you eat to the way you handle stress, affects how brain cells grow and how connections form. During this time, the mother's health is the baby's environment. Nutrition, medicines, infections, and even stress levels play a role in shaping how the brain develops. Early care for mothers therefore leads to stronger, healthier, and smarter children.

What Helps During Pregnancy

1. Regular Check-ups

Visiting your doctor regularly during pregnancy is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your baby. These visits help:

- Monitor your baby's growth and development.
- Check your blood pressure and sugar levels.
- Detect problems early so they can be treated in time.

When mothers skip check-ups, small health issues can grow into big problems for both mother and child. Remember: early care means a healthier mother and a stronger baby brain.

2. Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) Tablets

Many mothers worry about taking tablets during pregnancy, but iron and folic acid are essential. They are not harmful — they are life-saving.

- Iron prevents anemia, a condition where your blood does not carry enough oxygen. Without enough oxygen, your baby's brain and body cannot grow properly.
- Folic acid supports brain and spinal cord development. It prevents serious conditions like spina bifida and reduces the risk of birth defects.

Skipping these tablets can increase the chances of premature delivery, low birth weight, and developmental problems. Please take them daily as advised by your doctor.

3. Vaccinations

Vaccines are not just for children; they protect mothers too. One important vaccine is the rubella vaccine, which protects against measles, mumps, and rubella. If a mother gets rubella during pregnancy, the baby's brain, eyes, hearing, and even heart can be badly affected.

Some people spread myths that vaccines cause infertility or harm the baby. This is not true. Vaccines are safe, tested, and protect both mother and child. Taking them before or during pregnancy ensures your baby gets the best protection right from the start.

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4. Good Nutrition

What you eat is what your baby receives. Think of your food as fuel for your child's brain.

- Eat iron-rich foods like green leafy vegetables, jaggery, and dates.
- Add folic acid foods such as lentils and citrus fruits.
- Include omega-3 rich foods like flaxseeds, walnuts, and fish for brain growth.
- Drink enough water and include milk and dairy products for calcium.
- Avoid junk food, smoking, alcohol, and excess tea or coffee.

Balanced nutrition helps brain cells grow and connect better, giving your child a healthy start in life.

5. Managing Stress and Mental Health

Pregnancy can be stressful — and that's normal. But long-term stress can affect your baby's sleep, mood, and even future behavior. Stress hormones in the mother can travel to the baby and affect brain development.

That is why your emotional wellbeing is just as important as physical health. Take time to relax, meditate, or do simple breathing exercises. Talk to your family and ask for support. Remember, a calm mother makes a calmer baby.

Myths vs. Facts

Many mothers receive advice from relatives, neighbours, or social media. While well-meaning, much of it is based on myths. Let us clear a few common ones:

- **Myth:** Iron tablets cause "big babies" and difficult deliveries.
• **Fact:** They prevent anemia and ensure healthy growth.
- **Myth:** Vaccines are dangerous and cause infertility.
• **Fact:** Vaccines are safe and protect both mother and child.
- **Myth:** If a child has a developmental disorder, nothing can be done.
• **Fact:** Early therapies like speech, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy bring real progress.
- **Myth:** Developmental delays are "fate" and cannot be changed.
• **Fact:** With early intervention and therapy, many delays can be improved.

Correct knowledge is the first step toward empowerment.

After Birth and Beyond

Even after birth, your role as a mother remains central. If your child is diagnosed with a neurodevelopmental disorder (NDD) like autism, ADHD, or speech delay, do not lose hope. A diagnosis is not the end — it is the beginning of a journey of support, therapy, and growth.

What can you do?

- Start early therapies like speech therapy, behavior support, and physiotherapy as advised.
- Maintain daily routines that give your child stability and comfort.
- Encourage communication, even through gestures or pictures if speech is delayed.
- Show love, patience, and acceptance — your child feels your support even without words.
- Join parent support groups to learn from others facing similar challenges.



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With consistent effort, many children make remarkable improvements and live fulfilling lives.

Early Stimulation for Brain Development: The First 3 Years

The first three years of life are often called the “brain’s golden years.” During this period, your baby’s brain grows faster than at any other time, forming millions of new connections every second. What you do during these years can shape how your child learns, talks, and relates to others for life.

Why It Matters

- Brain growth in the first 1,000 days is unmatched in speed and importance.
- Early stimulation builds the foundation for speech, movement, problem-solving, and emotional health.
- Children who receive love, attention, and play during this period develop stronger language and social skills.

How Mothers Can Support Brain Growth

Talking and Singing

- Talk to your baby while feeding, bathing, or dressing.
- Use simple words, repeat names, and describe what you are doing.
- Singing rhymes, lullabies, or folk songs helps babies recognize sounds and rhythm of language.

Cuddling and Responsive Care

- Hold your baby close, make eye contact, smile, and respond to coos or babbles.
- Comforting your baby when they cry teaches them that the world is safe and that their needs matter.
- This secure attachment becomes the basis for confidence and learning.

Simple Games for Development

- Peek-a-boo teaches object permanence.
- Clapping games build rhythm and coordination.
- Stacking blocks or cups improves motor skills and problem-solving.
- Pointing to pictures in books builds vocabulary and attention.

Love, Touch, and Security

- Gentle touch, massage, and skin-to-skin contact stimulate brain growth and emotional bonding.
- A child who feels safe is more likely to explore, learn, and play.

Key Message

Early stimulation is not about buying expensive toys — it is about time, attention, and love. Simple acts like talking, singing, playing, and cuddling are powerful tools that shape your child’s future.

A Mother’s Strength is the Child’s Foundation

At every stage, from pregnancy to early childhood, your strength is your child’s foundation. Your nutrition, your mental health, and your positive outlook help shape your child’s body and brain. Empowering mothers means empowering children, and empowered families lead to stronger communities and a stronger nation.

Every small step counts — eating healthy, attending check-ups, taking medicines on time, asking questions, playing with your child, and seeking help when needed. Each of these steps builds a healthier future for your child.

Final Words for Mothers

Dear Mothers, always remember: you are not alone. There are doctors, therapists, and support systems ready to walk this journey with you. With proper care, guidance, and your own inner strength, you can give your child the best possible start in life.

Believe in yourself. Believe in your resilience. Because a healthy, empowered mother builds a healthy, empowered future.

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Mother's Health, Child's Strength – Role of Maternal Nutrition on Infant Health

By: Dr. Bipul Kumar Das, Assistant Professor , Department of Pediatrics

Introduction

Every mother dreams of giving birth to a healthy and happy baby. One of the most important factors that shapes a baby's health is the mother's nutrition — both before and during pregnancy, and later while breastfeeding. A mother's body is the baby's first home and first source of food. When the mother eats well, the baby receives the right building blocks to grow strong.

Doctors and scientists call the time from conception until a child's second birthday the first 1,000 days. This period is often described as the "golden window" of human development because the brain, body, and immunity grow faster than at any other stage of life. Nutrition during this time can decide whether a child will grow well, learn easily, and fight illness effectively. Good maternal nutrition is therefore not just about the mother's health — it is an investment in the future strength of the child.

Why Maternal Nutrition is So Important

From the very moment of conception, the baby depends entirely on the mother's body for food and protection. The nutrients that the mother eats help in:

- Forming organs such as the heart, kidneys, and brain.
- Building bones, muscles, and blood.
- Supporting immunity so the baby can fight infections.
- Preventing birth defects like problems of the brain or spine.

Both undernutrition (not enough food or missing nutrients) and overnutrition (excess weight or obesity) can harm the baby. For example:

- Undernutrition increases the risk of low birth weight, preterm birth, delayed brain development, and higher illness rates.
- Overnutrition or obesity in mothers can also cause complications, including high blood pressure, diabetes, and sometimes restricted growth of the baby inside the womb.

Thus, balance is key. Eating a nutritious, balanced diet keeps the mother healthy and gives the baby the best chance to thrive.

Key Nutrients During Pregnancy

Pregnant women need about 400 extra calories per day in addition to their normal food intake. But more important than the amount is the quality of food. Some nutrients are especially crucial:

Folic Acid

- Prevents serious birth defects of the brain and spine.
- Best taken before pregnancy (at least 1 month prior) and during the first 3 months.
- Sources: leafy greens, lentils, fortified cereals, citrus fruits.

Iron

- Needed for healthy blood and oxygen supply to the baby.
- Prevents anemia in the mother, which causes weakness and increases risk of premature delivery.
- Sources: spinach, jaggery, red meat, poultry, legumes, iron-fortified grains.

Calcium

- Essential for the baby's bones and teeth.
- Also protects the mother's bone health.
- Sources: milk, curd, cheese, fortified plant milk, ragi, leafy greens.

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Mother's Health, Child's Strength – Role of Maternal Nutrition on Infant Health

By: Dr. Bipul Kumar Das, Assistant Professor , Department of Pediatrics

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

- Important for brain and eye development.
- Sources: fatty fish (like hilsa, mackerel), walnuts, flaxseeds, fish oil supplements (as advised by doctor).

Protein

- Needed for the growth of both baby and mother's tissues.
- Sources: eggs, milk, beans, lentils, nuts, soy, chicken, fish.

Vitamin D

- Helps calcium absorption, supports immunity.
- Sources: sunlight, fortified dairy, fatty fish, supplements if prescribed.

Nutrition During Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is nature's best gift to a baby. Breast milk contains exactly the right nutrients and antibodies needed for growth and immunity. But to produce good-quality milk, the mother must eat well too.

A lactating mother needs about 550 extra calories per day and plenty of fluids. Some key nutrients include:

- Protein – for milk production and mother's tissue repair. (Milk, meat, fish, eggs, dals, nuts).
- Calcium – to maintain strong bones and healthy breast milk. (Dairy, ragi, leafy greens, almonds).
- Iron – to keep the mother strong and prevent anemia. (Spinach, beans, fortified cereals, poultry, fish).
- Vitamin D – helps baby's bones grow well. (Sunlight, fortified foods).
- Vitamin B12 – vital for baby's brain development, especially important for vegetarian mothers. (Eggs, dairy, fortified cereals).
- Omega-3 fatty acids – for baby's brain and eye growth. (Fish, walnuts, flaxseeds).
- Iodine – helps in thyroid function and brain development. (Iodized salt, seafood, milk).
- Zinc – for immunity and growth. (Legumes, seeds, nuts, meat).

Alongside, mothers must stay well-hydrated, avoid excessive tea, coffee, or alcohol, and eat a mix of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats.

Practical Tips for Mothers and Families

- **Balanced Diet:** Instead of "eating for two," focus on eating smart. A thali with rice/roti, dal, seasonal vegetables, milk/curd, and a small portion of fish, egg, or meat is a good everyday example.
- **Local and Affordable Foods:** Use regionally available foods like mustard greens, black gram, bamboo shoots, small fish, jaggery, and bananas.
- **Start Early:** Begin taking supplements like iron and folic acid before conception, not just after pregnancy is confirmed.
- **Exclusive Breastfeeding:** Feed only breast milk for the first 6 months. No water, honey, or animal milk is needed. Continue breastfeeding up to 2 years, along with complementary foods after 6 months.
- **Avoid Harmful Habits:** Smoking, alcohol, and too much packaged junk food harm both mother and baby.
- **Seek Medical Advice:** Regular antenatal check-ups help monitor weight, blood pressure, and nutritional status. Doctors can advise when supplements are needed.



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Role of Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare workers — doctors, nurses, dieticians, ASHA and Anganwadi workers — play a vital role by:

- Educating families about the importance of maternal nutrition.
- Monitoring mothers for anemia, undernutrition, or obesity.
- Providing supplements like IFA (iron-folic acid) and calcium.
- Supporting adolescent mothers and families with low income.
- Linking families to government schemes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, Janani Suraksha Yojana, and Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram.

Community-level awareness can help prevent problems before they start and ensure no child is left behind due to poor nutrition.

Conclusion

A mother's health is the foundation of a child's strength. Good nutrition before and during pregnancy and throughout breastfeeding not only ensures safe motherhood but also builds the physical, mental, and emotional health of the next generation. Poor nutrition can lead to problems such as low birth weight, birth defects, and delayed development, while good nutrition can unlock the baby's full potential.

Dear Mothers, remember: Your nutrition is your baby's nutrition. By caring for yourself, you are building your child's future. Eating healthy, taking supplements, resting, and seeking support are not luxuries — they are essential steps toward raising a strong and resilient child.



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Digital Parenting: Managing Screen Time for Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD)

By: Dr. Gaurav Gupta, Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics

Introduction

Dear Parents,

We live in a world where mobile phones, televisions, tablets, and computers are everywhere. Even very young children quickly learn to swipe, scroll, and watch videos. For many families, especially those raising children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDD) such as autism, ADHD, or speech and language delays, digital devices can sometimes feel like both a blessing and a burden.

On one hand, educational apps, online therapy sessions, and videos can provide learning opportunities. On the other hand, excessive screen time can worsen attention, sleep, and behavior problems, making it harder for children to learn and connect with the world around them.

That is why "digital parenting" — knowing how much screen time is healthy, when and how screens should be used, and what alternatives are available — has become an important part of raising children today.

Why Screen Time Matters More for Children with NDD

Children with NDDs are more sensitive to environmental influences. Screens can affect them in several ways:

- Attention problems: Long hours in front of screens may worsen hyperactivity or reduce focus.
- Language delays: Passive watching does not encourage speaking; children learn best through real interactions.
- Sleep disturbances: Screen use late at night can disrupt sleep cycles, leading to irritability and poor learning.
- Behavior issues: Sudden removal of devices often causes meltdowns, as children may depend on screens for comfort.
- Reduced physical activity: More screen time usually means less playtime, affecting motor skills and overall health.

For these reasons, digital parenting is especially important in families caring for children with developmental challenges.

What Do the Guidelines Say?

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) provide clear recommendations on screen time:

- Under 2 years: No screen time at all, except for video calls with relatives.
- 2–5 years: Maximum of 1 hour per day, and only high-quality content.
- 6–12 years: No more than 2 hours per day for recreational screen time.
- Adolescents: Balanced use, with strong limits to prevent overuse.

Remember: These are maximum limits. Less is better, especially for children with NDD, who benefit more from face-to-face interactions, sensory play, and structured routines.

Balancing the Good and the Bad

Not all screen time is harmful. Some digital content can be useful if used in moderation and under parental guidance.

Positive uses include:

- Online speech therapy or occupational therapy sessions.
- Educational videos that teach rhymes, counting, or language in your child's mother tongue.
- Video calls with family members that encourage real conversations.

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But what should be avoided?

- Unsupervised, long hours of cartoons or random YouTube videos.
- Fast-paced, violent, or overstimulating content that increases aggression.
- Using mobile phones as the only way to calm your child ("digital babysitter").

The key is balance: using digital media as a tool, not as a replacement for real play and relationships.

Healthy Alternatives to Screen Time

Children learn best when they use their senses — touching, moving, listening, and talking. Here are some enjoyable alternatives to screens:

Sensory Play

- Clay modeling, water play, sand play.
- Sorting pulses, rice, or colorful beads.
- Finger painting or simple craft work.

Storytelling and Reading

- Narrate simple stories from your childhood or local culture.
- Use picture books — ask your child to point to objects, repeat words, or make sounds.
- Bedtime stories strengthen both language and bonding.

Outdoor Play

- Simple activities like running, cycling, or ball games improve motor skills.
- Even walking barefoot on grass can provide calming sensory input.

Music and Dance

- Singing rhymes, clapping games, or dancing together boosts language and social skills.

Daily Chores as Learning

- Involve your child in safe household activities — stirring, folding clothes, watering plants.
- Name objects and actions while doing them to build vocabulary.

These activities not only reduce screen time but also promote real-world learning.

Practical Tips for Digital Parenting

Many parents tell us, "Doctor, we try to reduce screen time, but our child cries so much, what can we do?" Here are some strategies:

Set Clear Routines

- Fix screen time only at certain times (for example, 30 minutes after homework).
- Avoid screens during meals, before bedtime, or immediately after waking up.

Co-View with Your Child

- Watch together and discuss what is happening on the screen.
- Ask questions like, "What color is this? What is the boy doing?"
- This makes screen time interactive and builds language.



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Choose Quality Content

- Prefer educational, slow-paced, and age-appropriate programs.
- Use apps with parental filters to block harmful content.

Be a Role Model

- Children copy adults. If parents are always on phones, children will demand the same.
- Reduce your own non-essential screen time in front of your child.

Gradual Reduction

- If your child is used to long screen hours, do not suddenly stop.
- Slowly reduce time and replace with engaging activities.

Create Screen-Free Zones

- Keep bedrooms and dining tables free of phones and TVs.
- Encourage family conversations and shared meals instead.

When to Seek Professional Help

Sometimes, screen use is linked to deeper challenges. Seek help from your pediatrician or psychologist if:

- Your child cannot be calmed without a screen.
- Screen time is more than 4–5 hours daily despite your efforts.
- Child shows delayed speech, poor eye contact, or loss of interest in play.

Early guidance and therapy can prevent long-term problems.

A Mother's Role in Digital Parenting

For most families, mothers are the primary caregivers and decision-makers for children's daily routines. This makes their role in digital parenting crucial. By setting boundaries with love, providing alternatives, and ensuring positive use of technology, mothers can protect their children from the harmful effects of excessive screen time while still using technology in meaningful ways.

Remember: you are stronger than the screen. Your smile, your voice, your stories, and your touch will always teach your child more than any gadget can.

Conclusion

Digital devices are here to stay — we cannot and should not completely avoid them. But by practicing mindful digital parenting, we can ensure that technology becomes a tool for growth, not a source of harm.

- Follow recommended screen time limits.
- Encourage alternatives like play, reading, and outdoor activities.
- Guide your child's screen use instead of letting it control them.
- Involve the whole family in creating healthy routines.

Dear Parents, the goal is not to create a "no screen" world, but a balanced world where your child grows up curious, active, and emotionally secure. For children with NDD, your attention, patience, and guidance matter far more than any app or video. With your support, children can learn to use technology wisely — without losing the beauty of real play, family time, and human connection.



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Strength for the Mind, Peace for the Heart: A Wellbeing Guide for Mothers

By: Diksha Sharma & Subhamoni Kaman, Psychologists

Dear Mothers,

Parenting is a journey of love, responsibility, and endless learning. But parenting a child with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDDs)—such as autism, ADHD, intellectual disability, or speech and language delays—requires even greater patience, strength, and resilience. Many mothers silently carry both the emotional weight and the practical responsibilities of caregiving. At times, this can feel overwhelming, lonely, or exhausting.

We want you to know: you are not alone. Your wellbeing matters just as much as your child's. A calm, healthy, and confident mother creates a positive, stable environment in which a child can grow and thrive. Looking after yourself is not selfish; it is essential.

This guide shares simple, practical strategies to help you care for your mind, body, and heart, so you can continue to support your child with strength and love.

Why Your Wellbeing Matters

When you are relaxed, you have more patience to respond calmly to your child's behavior.

When you are healthy, you have the energy to manage therapy sessions, school meetings, and daily routines.

When you are emotionally supported, you feel less isolated and more confident.

When you model self-care, your child learns the value of balance, routine, and emotional regulation.

Remember this: Your resilience is your child's strength.

Practical Self-Care Techniques for Mothers

1. Deep Breathing and Relaxation

Stress can quickly build up in the body. A few minutes of deep breathing can calm your mind and restore focus.

- o Try pranayama practices such as alternate-nostril breathing or "bee breath."
- o Sit or lie down comfortably, close your eyes, and take 5–10 slow breaths.
- o This can be done anywhere — while waiting for your child's therapy session, after chores, or before sleep.

2. Quick Meditation or Prayer

Even 2–3 minutes of quiet reflection can reset your mood.

- o Chant "Om," recite a shloka, or say a short prayer.
- o Use free guided meditations in your preferred language (many are available online).
- o These moments of stillness bring peace, clarity, and strength.

3. Gentle Yoga or Stretches

Simple yoga poses can help release tension:

- o Balasana (Child's Pose): Calms the mind and relaxes the body.
- o Tadasana (Mountain Pose): Improves posture and breathing.
- o Shavasana (Corpse Pose): Helps with complete relaxation.

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4. Physical Activity

Movement is medicine.

- o Take a short walk outside or around the rooftop when your child is playing.
- o Practice 2–3 rounds of Surya Namaskar for energy.
- o Light stretching before bedtime helps release stress from the day.

5. Family and Community Support

- o Share your feelings with a trusted friend, sister, or neighbor.
- o Avoid isolating yourself due to fear of judgment.
- o Join support groups of parents with children with NDD — many mothers find strength when they realize others are walking the same journey.

Emotional Wellbeing for Mothers of Children with NDD

Beyond physical self-care, it's important to nurture your emotional health. Here are specific approaches that can help:

1. Accepting and Adjusting Expectations

- o Progress may be slower for your child, but every small step is valuable.
- o Celebrate milestones like making eye contact, saying a new word, or playing with others — these are as important as academic successes.

2. Coping with Guilt and Comparison

- o Many mothers blame themselves when their child struggles. Please remember: NDDs are not your fault.
- o Avoid comparing your child with others. Each child has their own timeline.

3. Managing Stress During Challenging Behaviors

- o Children with NDD may show tantrums, repetitive behaviors, or difficulties in communication. In such moments:
 - Take a short pause and breathe before reacting.
 - Use calm, simple words instead of shouting.
 - After the situation, take a few minutes for yourself — drink water, sit quietly, or stretch.

4. Building Social Support

- o Connect with teachers, therapists, and other mothers for advice.
- o Share your child's progress and struggles openly.
- o Remember, asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Practical Activities That Support Both Mother and Child

Some activities can benefit both you and your child:

- **Music:** Play calming bhajans, folk songs, or instrumental music. It soothes both mother and child.
- **Art or Craft:** Coloring, drawing, or even rangoli can reduce stress and engage your child at the same time.
- **Gardening:** Planting seeds or watering plants is therapeutic for you and a learning opportunity for your child.
- **Storytelling:** Reading stories aloud improves bonding, relaxes the mind, and builds your child's language skills.



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When to Seek Professional Help

Sometimes self-care is not enough. If you notice:

- Constant sadness or hopelessness.
- Severe anxiety or panic attacks.
- Trouble sleeping or eating.
- Feeling that you cannot cope with daily tasks.

Please reach out to a psychologist, counselor, or doctor. Seeking professional help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Key Reminders for Mothers

- You are doing your best — and that is enough.
- Take life one day at a time. Progress is a journey, not a race.
- Small self-care habits practiced daily lead to big changes in mental health.
- Your love and strength are your child's greatest resources.

Final Words

Dear Mothers,

Parenting a child with NDD is a journey filled with challenges, but also with moments of joy, laughter, and pride. Remember that your mental health is just as important as your child's therapy sessions. By caring for your own mind and heart, you are building a stronger foundation for your child's future.

Take time each day — even if just a few minutes — for deep breathing, prayer, movement, or simply sitting quietly. Share your joys and struggles with others, and never hesitate to ask for support.

You are not alone in this path. With resilience, self-care, and community, you can continue to provide the love and guidance your child needs. And always remember: Strength for the Mind, Peace for the Heart — begins with you.



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Simple Home-Based Activities to Support Children with NDD

By: Gourav Goswami, Occupational Therapist

Dear Parents,

Raising a child with a Neurodevelopmental Disorder (NDD) such as autism, cerebral palsy, or ADHD can sometimes feel like a daily challenge. Tasks that may look simple for other children — buttoning a shirt, following instructions, or playing with blocks — may require extra effort and patience in your home. While therapy sessions with an occupational therapist are important, they usually last only an hour or two a week. The rest of the time, your home becomes the most powerful place for learning and progress.

The good news is that you don't need expensive toys or equipment. Using simple household items, you can turn everyday chores, play, and traditions into fun therapy opportunities. This way, learning becomes natural and enjoyable for your child, and family members can also join in the process.

Why Home Activities Matter

The first five years of life are the most important for brain development. During this time, the brain makes millions of new connections every second. Children with NDD may find it harder to build these skills, but with repeated practice at home, progress is possible.

- Fine motor skills (using hands and fingers) are needed for writing, dressing, eating, and playing.
- Gross motor skills (using larger muscles) are needed for sitting, walking, climbing, and running.
- Cognitive skills (thinking, memory, problem-solving) help with learning and following routines.

By practicing at home, your child gets more chances to learn these skills in a safe and loving environment.

Fun Fine Motor Activities

- **Everyday tasks:** Ask your child to peel fruits like bananas or oranges, open snack containers, or crumple paper into "snowballs" and throw them into a basket. These activities build finger strength and hand coordination.
- **Paper play:** Let them tear newspapers, make paper balls, or fold paper airplanes. Simple crafts like origami or collages with cut-outs improve hand skills and planning.
- **Clothespin games:** Use hair clips or clothespins to pick up cotton balls or beads.
- **Play dough:** Homemade dough from atta and salt is perfect for rolling, pinching, and shaping.
- **Self-care practice:** Encourage buttoning, zipping, or tying. Even if messy at first, it builds independence and confidence.

Gross Motor Activities

- **Core strength:** Try "wheelbarrow walks" (hold your child's legs while they walk on hands) or let them lie on a pillow and reach for toys. Simple yoga poses like cobra or tree pose improve posture and body awareness.
- **Games:** Play Simon Says, dance to folk or Hindi songs, or make animal walks like bear crawls and frog jumps. These games improve balance and coordination.
- **Obstacle courses:** Use pillows, chairs, and ropes to create fun challenges at home.
- **Outdoor play:** Draw hopscotch with chalk, play catch with balloons, or involve your child in gardening. These activities are excellent for movement and sensory experiences.

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Cognitive and Thinking Skills

- Puzzles and sorting: Start with simple wooden puzzles, or sort beans, bangles, or bottle caps.
- Memory games: Show a few objects on a tray, then hide one and ask your child which one is missing.
- "I Spy": Play observation games like "I spy something red" to improve attention.
- Story time: Reading aloud in Assamese, Hindi, or English introduces new words and improves imagination.
- Planning activities: Cooking together can teach sequencing. Let your child pour, stir, or help make laddoos.

Encouragement and Family Involvement

Progress may be slow, but every small step counts. Celebrate simple achievements — whether it's holding a crayon properly, saying a new word, or finishing a puzzle. Involve grandparents and siblings too. Traditional games, crafts, and even household chores can become learning opportunities.

Always remember: home activities are not meant to replace professional therapy but to support and extend it. Consult your occupational therapist for guidance on which activities best suit your child.

Conclusion

Children with NDD learn best when practice becomes part of everyday life. By turning your home into a playful and supportive environment, you give your child countless opportunities to grow stronger, more independent, and more confident. With patience, love, and creativity, parents can make a big difference.

Your child's journey may be different, but with your support, it can also be joyful and full of achievements.



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Movement is Medicine: Simple Exercises Mothers Can Do With Their Children at Home

By: Henna Anzum, Physiotherapist

Dear Parents,

Every child learns about the world through movement. For children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDDs), movement can sometimes be delayed or more difficult — but it is also one of the most powerful tools for growth. Physical activity not only strengthens muscles and bones but also supports brain development, coordination, social skills, and confidence.

As a mother, you are your child's first and most important coach. While therapy sessions with a physiotherapist are valuable, what happens at home every day has the greatest impact. The good news is that you do not need expensive equipment or special gyms. With love, patience, and a few simple activities, your home can become the perfect space for learning and exercise.

Why Exercise Matters for Children with NDD

Children with NDD often face challenges like low muscle strength, poor balance, or delayed motor milestones such as sitting, crawling, or walking. Regular exercise helps:

- Strengthen core muscles needed for posture and stability.
- Improve balance and coordination.
- Support joint flexibility and mobility.
- Encourage independence in walking, playing, and self-care.
- Boost attention, confidence, and emotional wellbeing.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), all children — including those with disabilities — should be encouraged to participate in physical activity daily, adapted to their abilities. Even a few minutes of play-based exercises can make a big difference over time.

Guidelines for Mothers Before Starting

- Do exercises only when your child is awake, alert, and happy.
- Start with very short sessions (1–2 minutes) and gradually increase.
- Avoid doing exercises right after meals; wait at least 30 minutes.
- Use a soft, safe surface (bed mat, carpet, yoga mat).
- Always make it fun — turn exercises into games.

Simple Home-Based Exercises

Here are some activities you can try at home. Each has a playful name to make it enjoyable for children.

1. Tummy Time — “Treasure Lift” (0–12 months)

Place your baby on their tummy on a mat or on your chest. Hold a bright toy at eye level and encourage them to lift their head. This strengthens the neck, back, and shoulder muscles needed for sitting and crawling.

2. Bicycle Legs — “Pedal the Clouds” (Infants)

Gently move your baby's legs in a cycling motion. This encourages hip flexibility, digestion, and active movement.

3. Supported Sitting & Reaching — “Feed the Box”

If your child has sitting delays, support their hips and place toys slightly out of reach. Ask them to reach and grab, which strengthens the trunk and improves hand-eye coordination.

4. Assisted Rolling — “Roll to the Toy”

Help your child roll from back to tummy or tummy to back while reaching for a toy. Rolling is essential for developing balance and body awareness.

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5. **Crawling Pathway — “Jungle Trail”**

Create a crawling adventure with cushions, soft toys, or tunnels made from blankets. Crawling strengthens arms, legs, and coordination.

6. **Sit-to-Stand Practice — “Pick the Fruit”**

Encourage your child to pull up to stand using a chair or low table. Place toys a little higher each time. This strengthens leg and hip muscles.

7. **Mini Step-Ups — “Mountain Steps”**

Use a low, stable step or sturdy box. Support your child as they step up and down. This builds balance and leg strength.

8. **Balance Games — “Balloon Balance”**

Stand together on a carpet or cushion and gently shift side to side. Add a balloon to toss and catch while balancing. This improves coordination and focus.

9. **Animal Walks & Heavy Work — “Bear, Crab, Push”**

- o Bear walks (on hands and feet, bottom up).
- o Crab walks (sit with hands and feet on floor, move backward).
- o Pushing a toy cart or a light box filled with books.

These activities build strength, body awareness, and stamina.

10. **Ball Play — “Catch the Sunshine”**

Roll or gently toss a soft ball back and forth. This teaches turn-taking, improves coordination, and encourages social interaction.

Making Exercise Fun with Words and Stories

Children respond best when exercise feels like play. Try using simple scripts to motivate your child:

- “Can you help mummy climb the mountain? One, two — yay!”
- “Let’s feed the box — use your strong hand!”
- “Show me the bear walk — ready? Roar!”

Adding laughter, sound effects, or small rewards like claps and hugs makes exercise enjoyable and motivating.

How Much Is Enough?

- For infants (0–1 year): short bursts of supervised play several times a day.
- For toddlers and young children: at least 30–60 minutes of active play spread throughout the day.

Overcoming Common Challenges

- “My child refuses to do exercises.” Make it playful — use toys, songs, or join in yourself. Children copy adults!
- “We don’t have space at home.” Even a small corner with a mat is enough. Use everyday objects like pillows, chairs, or balloons.
- “Progress is very slow.” Celebrate small steps. Every attempt — lifting the head, crawling a few inches, standing for a few seconds — is progress.
- “I am not a therapist.” You don’t need to be. With guidance, mothers can do simple, safe exercises daily to support therapy.

Quality matters more than quantity. Consistency, even for a few minutes daily, brings better results than long sessions done rarely.

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The Bigger Picture: Exercise Beyond the Body

Exercise is not just about physical strength. For children with NDD, it also:

- Improves attention and concentration, helping with learning.
- Reduces frustration and restlessness.
- Encourages bonding between mother and child.
- Builds self-esteem as the child masters new skills.

Studies show that home-based programs, when supported by therapists, can be as effective as clinic sessions — especially in resource-limited settings. By actively participating, parents become partners in their child's growth journey.

Final Words for Mothers

Dear Mothers, remember that movement is medicine. Your child's therapy does not have to stop when you leave the hospital or therapy center. Every playful push, roll, or stretch at home is a step toward independence and confidence. You don't need fancy gyms, you don't need perfection — you only need patience, creativity, and love. With your guidance, every climb, crawl, or step becomes progress.

Your child may face challenges, but together you can turn every small victory into a celebration. Because when mothers and children move together, they grow together.



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Maternal Empowerment and Child Language Development: Evidence from a Community-Based Workshop

By: Dhruba Jyoti Das & Pallabi Kakoti, Speech-Language Pathologists

Introduction

Communication lies at the heart of human connection. For children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDDs)—such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Intellectual Disability (ID), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or speech and language delays—this connection may require additional time, effort, and creativity. But one fact remains clear: mothers are among the most powerful facilitators of their children's communication.

Global research has consistently reinforced this idea. The World Health Organization (2020) highlights that empowering parents through community-based rehabilitation and early stimulation programs significantly improves developmental outcomes. Similarly, UNICEF (2021) identifies responsive caregiving—when caregivers notice, respond to, and encourage their child's attempts to communicate—as one of the five pillars of nurturing care that shape lifelong health, learning, and wellbeing.

Closer to home, Indian studies provide strong evidence as well. Research from AIIMS New Delhi and NIMHANS Bengaluru has shown that parent-mediated interventions lead to measurable improvements in vocabulary, social interaction, and school readiness for children with speech and language delays. Regional studies from Assam and the North-East confirm that when mothers are trained in simple, home-based communication strategies, children's attention and language improve, while mothers themselves experience reduced stress and increased confidence.

Against this background, the Women's Empowerment Workshop is more than just a program — it is a movement. By empowering mothers, we are not only supporting children's speech and language development but also strengthening families, communities, and future generations.

Empowerment Through Knowledge

The first step towards empowerment is knowledge. Many mothers are unsure whether their child's communication is "on track" or when to seek professional help. In our workshops, we help mothers:

- Recognize early milestones such as babbling, pointing, waving bye-bye, and first words.
- Identify red flags like absence of babbling by 12 months, no single words by 18 months, or loss of previously learned skills.
- Understand that NDDs are not caused by parenting style. Myths that blame mothers are harmful and false.

Early recognition of delays allows for early intervention, which can significantly change a child's developmental trajectory. Knowledge gives mothers the power to notice signs, seek help, and act with confidence.

Empowerment Through Skills

Language learning does not only happen in therapy rooms — it happens most naturally in the daily lives of families. That is why we teach mothers practical skills they can use every day.

Responsive Communication

- Follow your child's lead — if your child points to a toy car, talk about it.
- Allow enough time for responses, even if it takes longer.
- Expand on what your child says: if the child says "car," you can say "Yes, a red car is going fast!"

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Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Some children may not speak or may speak very little. That does not mean they cannot communicate.
- Use picture cards, gestures, or signs.
- Try simple mobile apps that support AAC.
- Teach children to exchange a picture card for an object they want (like a ball).

Every child deserves a voice. AAC ensures that children can express themselves and reduces frustration.

Integrating Language into Daily Routines

- At mealtime, name foods: "Rice, dal, roti."
- During play, describe actions: "The doll is sleeping."
- While cooking, narrate steps: "First we cut vegetables, then we cook."

These natural opportunities build vocabulary and sentence structures without needing special time or equipment.

Evidence from both global and Indian research shows that consistent use of such parent-led strategies leads to meaningful gains in comprehension, expressive language, and social participation.

Empowerment Through Wellbeing

Communication is not only about words — it is deeply tied to emotion and connection. A stressed or exhausted mother may find it harder to engage patiently with her child. This is why our workshops emphasize maternal wellbeing as part of child development.

We encourage mothers to:

- Practice stress management (deep breathing, short prayer, or meditation).
- Try mindfulness techniques such as focusing on the present moment while playing with the child.
- Prioritize small acts of self-care — reading, walking, or chatting with a friend.

A calm mother models calmness. A confident mother models resilience. Supporting mothers emotionally is therefore not separate from child therapy — it is a core part of it.

Empowerment Through Community

The journey of raising a child with NDD can feel isolating. But when mothers come together, they share strategies, celebrate progress, and provide mutual encouragement.

- Peer groups create safe spaces to discuss struggles and solutions.
- Support networks reduce stigma and loneliness.
- Community-based workshops amplify the effect of therapy by creating a culture of acceptance and empowerment.

As mothers connect, they discover strength in numbers. What once felt like an individual struggle becomes a shared mission.



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A Message to Mothers

As Speech-Language Pathologists, we can provide strategies, therapies, and guidance. But it is mothers who bring them to life. You are your child's first and most constant communication partner.

Every glance, every smile, every gesture from your child is an opportunity to build connection.

Every loving response you give is a building block for language and trust.

Empowerment is not about perfection but about persistence.

Every attempt — a sound, a gesture, a new word — is a victory. Each response from you teaches your child: "Your voice matters."

Through knowledge, skills, wellbeing, and community, barriers can be dismantled. Children can learn to connect with the world, and mothers can find recognition, confidence, and empowerment.

Conclusion

When a mother finds her voice, her child finds theirs. Together, they build stronger families, supportive communities, and brighter futures.

By investing in maternal empowerment, we are not only supporting children with NDD today but also laying the foundation for generations to come. Remember, mothers are not just caregivers — they are changemakers.

With your love, patience, and persistence, communication can blossom, confidence can grow, and both mother and child can thrive.



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Inclusive Learning, Bright Futures: Supporting Children with NDD at Home and School

By: Jahanara Begum, Special Educator and Early Intensivist

Dear Mothers and Families,

Every child has the right to learn, play, and grow in an environment that accepts them for who they are. For children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders (NDDs) such as autism, ADHD, intellectual disability, or speech and language delays, this journey can feel challenging — but with the right support, they can flourish.

Inclusive education and home-based learning strategies ensure that children are not left behind but instead are given equal opportunities to succeed. As parents, especially as mothers, your role is central. With love, patience, and collaboration, you can help your child learn both in school and at home.

What Inclusive Education Means

Inclusive education is about belonging and participation. It ensures that children with and without disabilities learn together in the same classroom and community. Instead of separating children, it focuses on making schools and homes welcoming for all. At school, teachers may use methods such as:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Teaching in multiple ways — pictures, stories, hands-on activities, or digital tools — so every child can understand in their own way.
- Adapted classrooms: Flexible seating, sensory corners, or short “movement breaks” for children who struggle with focus.
- Peer buddies: Assigning a supportive classmate to encourage social interaction and inclusion.

At home, parents can also support inclusive learning by:

- Creating predictable routines (homework time, reading, play).
- Using real-life activities as lessons (shopping teaches math, cooking teaches sequencing).
- Using assistive tools such as audiobooks, visual charts, or speech-to-text apps.

Strategies to Support Learning for Children with NDD

Children with NDD learn best when teaching is structured, consistent, and visual. Here are some strategies that help:

Instructional Approaches

- Chunking: Break big tasks into smaller, simple steps. For example, instead of saying “Get ready for school,” say “First brush your teeth, then wear your uniform.”
- Multisensory teaching: Combine seeing, hearing, and doing — show a picture of an apple, say the word, and let the child hold one.
- Practice and repetition: Repeat skills daily so they become habits.

Behavioral Approaches

- Positive reinforcement: Praise effort, not just results — “I love how you tried again!”
- Clear expectations: Use simple rules with visuals: “First work, then play.”
- Visual schedules: Show your child what comes next using pictures or charts.



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Communication Supports

Some children may not speak or may have limited words. In such cases, AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) helps:

- Low-tech tools: Picture cards, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).
- High-tech tools: Speech-generating apps such as Avaz or Proloquo2Go.

With PECS, children start by exchanging a picture for an item, then build sentences like "I want ball." This gives them a voice and reduces frustration.

Other proven methods include:

- TEACCH: Using visual schedules and structured environments.
- ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis): Teaching skills step by step with rewards.
- Social Stories: Short stories that explain social rules (like "How to greet a friend").
- Task Analysis: Breaking big tasks like brushing teeth into small steps.

Building Attention, Memory, and Learning Through Fun

Children learn best through play. Everyday games can teach essential skills:

- **Attention:** "Simon Says" or "I Spy" improve listening and focus. Short timed tasks (2–5 minutes) can slowly extend attention span. Yoga and breathing exercises also calm the mind.
- **Memory:** Play card-matching games, retell short stories, or use rhymes and songs to help recall.
- **Learning skills:**
 - Board games (Ludo, Snakes & Ladders) teach patience, counting, and turn-taking.
 - Cooking together teaches sequencing ("first wash vegetables, then cut").
 - Role-play (shopkeeper, doctor, teacher) builds communication and imagination.
 - Educational apps like Starfall or Khan Academy Kids can supplement learning.

How Mothers Can Collaborate with Teachers

Strong teamwork between parents and teachers helps children thrive. Here's how mothers can play an active role:

- **Communication:** Keep a daily notebook or share WhatsApp updates about progress, behavior, or new words.
- **Consistency:** If the school uses tools like PECS or token charts, use the same system at home. Children thrive on consistency.
- **Teamwork:** Participate in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, ask questions, and share what works at home.
- **Cultural connection:** Share stories, songs, or traditions with teachers to make learning meaningful.
- **Celebrate small wins:** Whether it's saying one new word or writing a single letter, progress is a journey worth celebrating together.

Overcoming Challenges in Inclusive Education

- **Social stigma:** Some families feel judged when their child struggles. Remember, inclusion is every child's right — and your child deserves to belong.
- **Slow progress:** Learning may take longer, but every child learns at their own pace. Patience and consistency matter more than speed.
- **Limited resources:** Even without fancy tools, simple household items can be turned into learning aids — picture cards, storybooks, kitchen items, and games.



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Why Inclusive Education Matters

Inclusive education is not just about academics. It builds confidence, friendships, and life skills. When children learn together, they learn acceptance and empathy. A child with NDD learns that they belong, while other children learn compassion and respect. This is the true meaning of inclusion.

For mothers, being part of this journey brings both challenges and rewards. You are not only your child's caregiver but also their advocate, teacher, and cheerleader. By working with teachers and creating a learning-friendly home, you are paving the way for your child's progress.

Final Words for Mothers

Dear Mothers, remember that your child's challenges do not define their potential. Every child can learn, and every small step forward is worth celebrating. You are your child's strongest support system, and your efforts — whether through creating routines, playing games, or collaborating with teachers — shape their future.

With patience, love, and teamwork, you can help your child not only learn but also feel included, valued, and confident. Because when mothers believe in their children, they inspire progress.

Together, let us build inclusive classrooms, supportive homes, and brighter futures for every child.

Activities Organized by the Department of Pediatrics and the Comprehensive Child Development & Early Intervention Centre (CDEIC), AIIMS Guwahati, for Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders.



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AIIMS Guwahati observes World Autism Awareness Day

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, April 4: In a concerted effort to spread awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and foster inclusivity, Young Indians (Yi), an initiative of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), collaborated with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Guwahati, and the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of Assam, to mark World Autism Awareness Day on April 2.

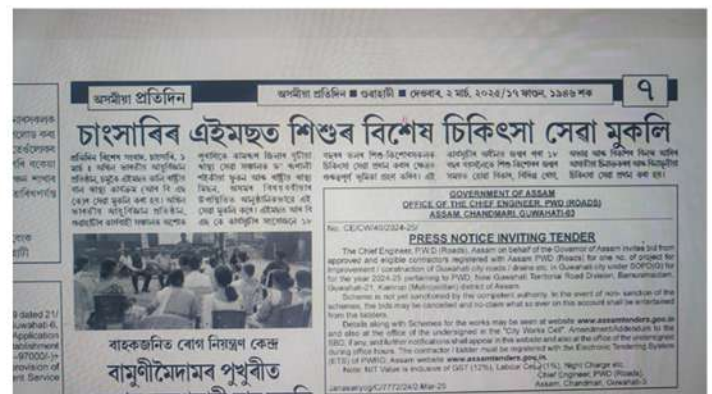
The event, held at AIIMS Guwahati, aimed to educate the public on autism and extend support to parents and caregivers of autistic children. A significant highlight was the launch of an autism awareness leaflet, providing accessible information on early signs of autism, available support systems, and the importance of inclusion. The awareness campaign engaged over 300 individuals, including students, parents, and healthcare workers.

A peer support discussion for parents offered a platform to share experiences and best practices in raising children on the autism spectrum. The event also featured engaging activities such as painting, drawing, musical chair, and an obstacle course for autistic children, encouraging creative expression and social interaction. Each participating child received a certificate and goodies in recognition of their involvement.

The programme was attended by esteemed faculty members of AIIMS and its Executive Director, Dr. Ashok Puranik, who underscored the significance of early intervention and community-driven initiatives in autism care.

"Inclusion begins with awareness," said Ronak Khetawat, Chair of Yi Guwahati. "By bringing together parents, educators, healthcare professionals, and the community, we are working towards a more empathetic and supportive society for individuals with autism."

The collaborative efforts of AIIMS, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, and Yi reaffirmed their commitment to fostering a sustainable ecosystem of awareness, care, and inclusion for individuals with autism.





Vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji For Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan

"Our nation's progress begins with healthy and empowered women. When mothers are strong, families flourish, and society becomes resilient. The Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan is dedicated to ensuring that women receive the care, respect, and opportunities they deserve - because a healthy mother builds a healthy India."

Vision for CDEIC, AIIMS Guwahati

"At AIIMS Guwahati, our mission is to provide comprehensive, compassionate, and inclusive care for every child with neurodevelopmental needs. Through the Comprehensive Child Development and early Intervention Centre (CDEIC), we bring together medical care, therapy education, and emotional support under one roof. Our vision is to stand beside families, empower mothers, and ensure that no child is left behind - regardless of background or ability."

