

Exploring responsive feeding within the context of sensitive parenting

– a randomized controlled trial among vulnerable infants

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Photo from our invitation pamphlet that all recruited families in the Infant Health Study receive when their child has turned 2 years

Aims

The present study aims to explore parental sensitivity and responsive feeding among infants with regulatory and developmental vulnerabilities

Methods

The study is a sub-study of the Infant Health Study (1), an ongoing cluster randomized controlled trial exploring a new intervention promoting sensitive parenting to infants with major regulatory and developmental vulnerabilities at ages 9-10 months identified via community health nurses' routine assessments using the PUF-program (2).

Infants with major difficulties are included as care-as-usual controls or cases who are offered the Video-Feedback Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting (VIPP) adapted to the PUF-program, the VIPP-PUF.

We aim to recruit approximately 600 families with about 400 families at follow-up, and 100 videos from a sub-population.

Outcomes

To measure the effectiveness of the VIPP-PUF intervention, we compare the outcomes at child ages 24 months using parent questionnaires and physical examinations, and in a sub-population also video-recordings.

Observational measures of parent and child behavior during meal- and playtime are applied to specifically assess parental sensitivity at child ages 24 months and will be analyzed by external raters using *the Coding Interactive Behavior (CIB)* (3).

CIB is a global rating system for social interactions based on parent and child behavior codes as well as dyadic codes rated on a 5-point Likert scale. All codes are summarized into a total mean score.

Parents report on their feeding practices and their child's eating behavior with the Preschooler Feeding Questionnaire (PFQ), the Child Feeding Questionnaire (CFQ) and the Child Eating Behavior Questionnaire (CEBQ). The physical examination includes measurement of the child's height and weight.

Background

Early childhood is a critical period for the development of regulation processes involved in later eating behavior and related health outcomes.

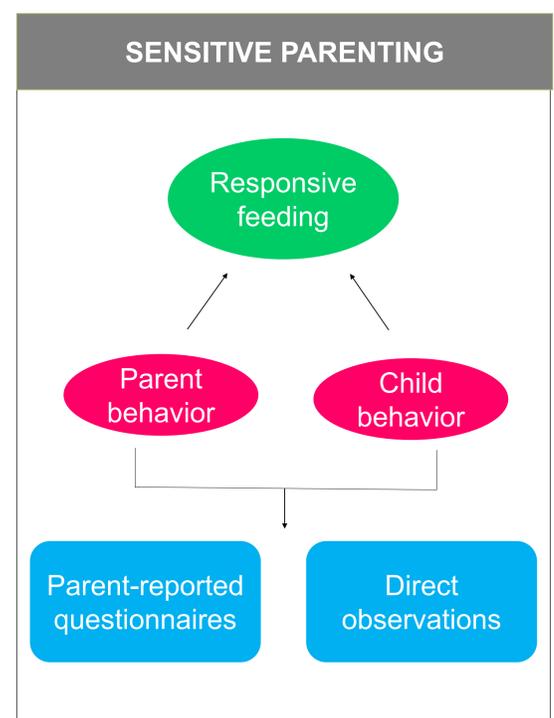
Responsive feeding within the context of *sensitive parenting* is a novel concept incorporating sensitive parental responses to all child signals including reinforcement of the child's ability to self-regulate food intake.

Discussion

This ongoing study combines both parent-reported questionnaires and observational measurements to capture all aspects shaping parent-child interaction at mealtimes including the bi-directionality of child and parent behavior.

This study also includes assessments of correlation to extend the knowledge on the validity of parental reports for use in epidemiological research.

Overall, the finding from this study will extend the knowledge on sensitive parenting in early childhood, particularly, when related to parental feeding and infants' eating.



Responsive feeding within the context of sensitive parenting taking into account parent and child behavior and parent-child interaction.

(1) <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT04601779?term=infant+health&cntry=DK&draw=2&rank=1>

(2) Skovgaard AM, Bakermans-Kranenburg M, Pontoppidan M, Tjørnhøj-Thomsen T, Madsen KR, Voss I, et al. The Infant Health Study - Promoting mental health and healthy weight through sensitive parenting to infants with cognitive, emotional, and regulatory vulnerabilities: protocol for a stepped-wedge cluster-randomized trial and a process evaluation within municipality settings. *BMC Public Health*. 2022;22(1):194.

(3) Feldman, R. (2012). Parenting Behavior as the Environment Where Children Grow. In L. Mayes & M. Lewis (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Environment in Human Development* (Cambridge Handbooks in Psychology, pp. 535-567). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 535-67.