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Reece Child loves to hang from the monkey bars and jump on a trampoline like most boys his age. Anyone watching him play probably wouldn’t notice anything special.

But for his mum and dad, it’s nothing less than a miracle.

“We were told when he was three weeks of age that he will have a lifelong disability and may never walk,” said Reece’s dad, Selwyn. “All the doctors and specialists said he’s not going to walk and we needed to register him on the NDIS as soon as possible.”

Doctors initially diagnosed Reece with cerebral palsy, but later discovered he has his own unique syndrome, consisting of among other things, hypotonia (low muscle tone), which impacts his mobility, muscle strength and swallowing.

Despite needing multiple supports for his condition, he turned the doctors’ prognosis upside down.

Reece painstakingly learned to roll over, sit up, then bum shuffled until nearly two before he could eventually stand and walk.

Today, not only does Reece not need a wheelchair, he can run, climb trees, kick a football, ride a balance bike and walk on a balance beam.

He has tried pre-Auskick and his dad says he ’absolutely nailed it’.

And on an unforgettable day in April last year, Reece walked his mother down the aisle, then stood with his parents while they exchanged vows. Later, at the reception, he danced.

“He was a little nervous,” said Reece’s mum, Ange, who weeps when she recalls her son’s often painful journey. “There were a lot of people there. It was very emotional, but amazing.”

Reece’s parents say his astonishing progress is all thanks to early intervention through the NDIS.

They believe Reece wouldn’t be where he is today without multiple intensive therapies, funded through Reece’s NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) plan and the support of NDIS provider Novita, which recognised Reece had the determination to prove doctors wrong.

“Reece had an amazing physio at Novita, Lindsay, who picked up that cognitively Reece was all there and that he was a very determined baby,” recalls Selwyn.

“When he was about six months old, she said, ‘Look I think he’s going to walk,’ and Ange and I just looked at each other and we were like, ‘What?’ We couldn’t believe it. We had all these

specialists and doctors saying he’s going to be in a wheelchair. That was a turning point for me, when my brain started to tick about early intervention and started to explore it to see what he could do.

“The journey we’ve been on with Reece has shown us the absolute importance of early intervention and intensive therapies—it’s crucial. If it wasn’t for the NDIS and Novita, we wouldn’t be in the position we are now. The NDIS has been like a miracle worker for us and we wouldn’t change a thing about it.”

Selwyn and Ange have been deeply affected by their experiences. They are now vocal advocates for early intervention and gaining access to the NDIS.

“As well as the NDIS making a change to a little boy’s life, it’s also made a massive change to his parents’ life as well, it has sustained us. It has changed our life in a very positive way, in regards to outcomes with our son but it has also brought us closer together as a family as well.”

Selwyn, who used to work in fitness and ran his own gym, has moved into the disability sector. He now works as a support coordinator with registered NDIS provider Access4U.

Reece celebrated his fifth birthday recently—running, jumping and playing with his friends being super heroes.

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