

What is

PANDAS/PANS

PANDAS stands for **Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections**. It is used to describe children who have a sudden onset of symptoms such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and/or tic disorders, following a strep infection (namely “strep throat” or Scarlet Fever). It is a misdirected immune response resulting in inflammation of a child’s brain.

PANS stands for **Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome**. It is a newer term used to describe all cases of abrupt onset OCD, not only those related to strep infections but other bacterial, environmental, or viral triggers that might cause the faulty auto-immune reaction.

For more information contact:

Jessica Gavin, PRAI Founder & President
jessica.gavin@pansadvocacy.org
804.615.5377
www.pansadvocacy.org



PANS
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What are the symptoms?

- OCD (obsessions and/or compulsions)
- Severe separation anxiety (e.g. child can’t be on a separate floor of the home than parents)
- Generalized anxiety
- Developmental regression (temper tantrums, “baby talk”, changes in handwriting or artwork, loss of academic abilities)
- Irritability (sometimes with aggression)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyperactivity, ADHD symptoms
- Motoric hyperactivity, abnormal movements, restlessness
- Verbal tics
- Difficulty sleeping/insomnia
- Increased daytime urination frequency and/or bedwetting
- Hypersensitivity to light or sounds, visual or auditory hallucinations
- Eating disruptions, Anorexia
- Oppositional Defiance

PANDAS/PANS can be easily misdiagnosed as OCD, ODD, ADHD, ADD and symptoms can be exasperated by psychotropic medication.

Why should I care?

It is said that parents see an average of 8 doctors and spend approximately 3 years seeking a diagnosis before discovering **PANS**. If caught early, treatment could be a simple long dose of an antibiotic. If left untreated, it could take years to recover or leave permanent damage to the child’s brain. Some children end up in psychiatric facilities or detention centers when they could have possibly had a treatable infection that caused their mental health issues and behavioral problems.

Who can get PANS/PANDAS?

Anecdotal reports suggest that some children can acquire **PANS/PANDAS** symptoms in the first year of life; however, the average patient age is 3-14 years of age.

How is it treated?

Many children respond well to antibiotics like amoxicillin (particularly Augmentin), Azithromycin and other beta-lactam antibiotics. Often a combination with a steroid can be helpful. In addition, some families have sought further treatment options such as removal of tonsils and adenoids, intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) and plasma exchange (plasmapheresis).

Blood work is not always a clear indicator of whether a patient has PANS/PANDAS. It is a clinical diagnosis and one of exclusion.

Is there any scientific research to support this?

The Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology has published a collection of research created by the PANS and PANDAS Consortium of Physicians and Researchers. You can find that information by visiting this link: <http://online.liebertpub.com/toc/cap/25/1>

Where can I learn more?

The **PANDAS Physicians Network (PPN)** is an organization that is dedicated to helping medical professionals better understand PANDAS and PANS through real-time information and networking. They are here to help.

Or visit us at pansadvocacy.org