What to do if you suspect PANS/PANDAS

Notice the change. Bring a clear history. Find informed care.

Start here: look back at recent infections

Think back over the weeks and months before the sudden changes. Did your child have strep throat, another throat infection, an ear infection, COVID-19 or another illness? Were they around someone who was sick?

Write down approximate dates, symptoms, known sick contacts, test results and treatment. Note when the behavioral changes began in relation to the illness. Tell the clinician about suspected exposures as well as confirmed infections.

A recent infection can be an important clue when symptoms change abruptly. Strep is specifically associated with PANDAS; other illnesses belong in the history but do not by themselves establish a PANS trigger or diagnosis. Ear infections and COVID are not equally established causes. Do not rule out an evaluation just because you cannot recall an infection.

NIMH: https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/pandas

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01 Recognize a sudden change

Look for an abrupt onset or major worsening over days, especially new OCD, rituals or severe food restriction. Other changes may include:

- Anxiety, panic or separation fears
- Tics, unusual movements or handwriting changes
- Irritability, aggression or intense mood swings
- Regression or loss of everyday skills
- School, attention or sensory difficulties
- Sleep changes, frequent urination or bedwetting

Bring a timeline: dates, recent illnesses, symptom notes and short videos.

02 Discuss an evaluation and basic tests

- Start with an exam and history. Ask your pediatrician about PANS/PANDAS and other possible explanations for the sudden changes.
- Active strep: ask whether a throat swab (rapid, molecular or culture) is appropriate.
- Blood tests: discuss ASO and anti-DNase B strep antibodies, plus a CBC, metabolic panel and ESR/CRP when clinically appropriate.
- Other triggers: Lyme, COVID or other infection tests depend on symptoms and exposure history; mold/allergy evaluation only when indicated.

No single test confirms PANS/PANDAS. High strep antibodies alone do not establish the diagnosis; your doctor interprets results with the clinical history.

03 Connect with a knowledgeable clinician

Start with your pediatrician, then explore these directories. Ask about PANS/PANDAS experience, children's ages accepted, availability and insurance or fees.

- Find a doctor with Liss Kron
- PANDAS Physicians Network (PPN)
- MAPS clinician directory

Educational information, not medical advice. Consult your child's doctor. Seek urgent care for inability to drink, severe confusion, seizures or immediate safety concerns.

Sources: Liss Kron guide & FAQs • NIMH • Clinical evaluation consensus