



Home and School Spotting the early signs

Has a parent/carer reported that their child has changed? Red flags include an unexplained deterioration in academic work, social skills, behaviour, emotions and new physical issues. The key is to note any new difficulties that represent a change from the child's typical level of functioning.

What are PANS and PANDAS?

PANS Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome

PANDAS Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder
Associated with Streptococcal Infections

PANS and PANDAS are post infectious autoimmune and/or neuroinflammatory medical conditions that affect both physical and mental health. These conditions, often triggered by common infections such as strep throat, chickenpox, or influenza, primarily affect children, with the onset of PANDAS typically occurring between the ages of 3 and 13. However the symptoms can persist into adulthood, and PANS can also affect adults. An exacerbation of symptoms is known colloquially as a flare.

Children with PANS and PANDAS can abruptly go from doing well in school to experiencing a range of difficulties. These can include developing obsessive thoughts and compulsions, urinary issues, tics, anxiety, a regression in skills, distressed behaviours, eating issues and problems sleeping. In some cases, children can develop unexpected special educational needs. Sometimes children also have sensory issues, hallucinations and thoughts of harming themselves. These issues can come and go with symptoms changing a lot over time. Any child with these symptoms should receive a full medical evaluation.

Physical Changes

- Is your child suffering from new-onset urinary frequency and toileting accidents and/or having the sensation that they need to continually wipe themselves?
- Has your child developed any unusual physical movements such as tics?
- Has your child's sleep pattern changed?
- Has your child experienced any recent onset sensory symptoms? These can include developing a heightened sensitivity to fabrics, lights, smells and noise.
- Can your child maintain their previous levels of physical and mental stamina?
- Have you noticed any changes around your child's eating patterns?
- Has your child become increasingly clumsy and/or has changed in their ability to do up their own buttons, or to write and colour accurately.
- Has your child complained of headaches, stomach aches, joint pain, vision changes or any other physical issues?



Please consider these questions and discuss them with an educational or health care professional. Not all of the questions will be relevant for every child. Children can present differently at home and at school.

Contact Us

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Whilst some of the content may also be relevant across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, this information is based on the Education system for England

Emotional and Development changes

- Has your child changed emotionally for example, appearing very unhappy, and/or developing severe anxiety including separation anxiety?
- Has your child developed any new behaviours, for example distressed outbursts or becoming overly compliant?
- Have you noticed any signs of behavioural regression, for example no longer being able to complete activities independently, or playing again with toys from a younger age?
- Has your child changed in terms of completing self-care skills such as dressing and washing?
- Has your child demonstrated any intrusive thoughts, compulsions, or rituals? These could include for example repeated thoughts about harm coming to their loved ones or counting/retracing their steps.
- Does your child feel that they are responsible for causing harm?
- Have the changes in your child's presentation impacted on the rest of the family?

Social and Communication Changes

- Have your child's social skills changed, for example their ability to enjoy activities with friends and family?
- Have there been any changes in your child's friendships for example, withdrawing, feeling paranoid or an increase in arguments and difficulties. Is your child complaining of feeling 'worn out' after spending short amounts of time with friends?
- Have your child's communication skills changed? Can they interact in ways that are age appropriate?
- Have there been any changes in their speech for example 'using baby talk' talking less or more, muddling/confusing words or stuttering?
- Have there been any changes with how your child spends their free time for example, have they withdrawn from any clubs and/or meeting friends? Have their activities at home changed for example their hobbies or the type of TV programs they watch?

It is not unusual in PANS and PANDAS for children to present very differently at home and at school. Many of the signs may also be difficult to observe in a school setting or could be internal such as obsessive thoughts and mental compulsions. Some children also mask their symptoms in school. The signs of PANS and PANDAS also cover a wide range and severity. The shifting symptoms can be very confusing for educators and families alike.

This checklist will be helpful for educational professionals to share with parents/caregivers.

Checklist for Parents/Carers

Have you noticed **multiple unexplained changes** in your child? **Key is to note any new difficulties that represent a change from your child's typical functioning.**

Please consider these questions and discuss them with an educational or health care professional. Not all of the questions will be relevant for every child.

Children can present differently at home and at school, and can have more than one condition or other factors in their lives.

These questions are not intended to be used as a diagnostic tool. PANS and PANDAS are medical conditions and can only be diagnosed by a medical professional.

Changes in school

- Has your child's attitude towards attending school changed, for example they were previously happy to go to school and are now struggling?
- Has there been a change in how your child manages their school routines, for example organising their school bag or completing their homework?
- Has your child's ability to manage their schoolwork changed?
- Has your child changed in their ability to follow and understand instructions?
- Have you noticed any changes in their reading and maths skills?
- Has your child's handwriting deteriorated and/or do their words drift to the side of the paper?
- Have their levels of concentration changed?
- Have you noticed any memory changes?