

## Pediatrics

# Interventions and Supports for Children with PANS and PANDAS

Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS) are characterized by inflammation in the brains of children. As a result of this inflammation, children with PANS or PANDAS exhibit anxiety, tics, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), restrictive eating behaviors, and personality changes. They can also experience a decline in mathematical and handwriting abilities and an increase in sensory sensitivities.

As a result of these conditions, children with PANS or PANDAS may require special interventions or extra support in the school environment. The following list describes some of these interventions and supports.

### ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS

- Having compassion for the child and their family
- Using assignment notebooks, planners, daily assignment sheets, and lists to help the child stay organized
- Providing the child with preferential assigned seating (in the front of the classroom, on the side opposite the dominant ear)
- Breaking down projects into smaller tasks, and using mnemonics to aid learning
- Discreetly using cues or prompts to help the child remember what's needed next
- Structuring the classroom environment so that there is a distraction-free study area
- Allowing the child extra bathroom breaks as needed
- Creating an adapted or shortened school day (or school week) for the child, and allowing them to supplement missed school time with at-home study
- Having a late slip or an excused late start in the child's file, and allowing the child extra time to get to and from classes

### ATTENTION SUPPORTS

- Providing the child with short, concise, written directions, if possible
- Providing the child with positive feedback about what they are doing right
- Frequently checking in with the teachers, parents, and child to determine waxing or waning levels of attention and help accommodate the child accordingly
- Providing the child with opportunities for breaks and movement when needed
- Recognizing that the child's decreased attention span may be due to poor stamina or poor listening skills

### SENSORY SUPPORTS

- Decreasing auditory overload or distractions
  - E.g., using carpeting, tennis balls on chair legs, muted P.A. systems, headphones, etc.
- Decreasing visual overload or distractions
  - E.g., using muted or neutral colors on the walls in working areas, installing mini-blinds on windows, reducing visual clutter, etc.
- Increasing awareness of olfactory and tactile stressors
- Providing opportunities for the child to learn social skills and coping strategies to improve behavioral health
  - E.g., physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, study hall, etc.

## MEMORY SUPPORTS

- Providing additional repetition/review of the concepts being taught
- Teaching only as much as the child can handle at one time, and introducing only one more bit of information when appropriate
- Presenting new information in a meaningful context
- Helping the child identify personal strengths and weaknesses in memorization
- Using calculators, math facts sheets, digital tape recorders, smart pens, lists, etc., to aid memory

## EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS

- Assigning an adaptive Physical Education Specialist to work with the child on mobility, tics, and safety protocols
- Providing the child with extended time for all projects involving writing
- Allowing the child to use a computer, word processor, note taker, recording device, or other assistive technology in class; allowing the use of graph paper when required
- Shortening long assignments (e.g., allowing the child to complete every other item, etc.)
- Providing reasonable alternative testing accommodations to the child. Reasonable testing accommodations include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Extended time (time and a half to double time)
  - Reader and/or scribe
  - Computer/adaptive technology
  - A less distracting environment
  - Oral processing or testing
  - Substitute formats of exams (e.g., essay vs. multiple choice)
  - Adjustable table height
  - Alternative text (print conversions)
  - Ability to move from sitting position as needed