

Supporting Your Child's "Brain on Fire": A Guide to PANS, PANDAS, and Neuro-Health

What is a "Brain on Fire"?

Sometimes, a child's personality or behavior seems to change almost overnight. They might suddenly struggle with intense worries, physical tics, or trouble eating and sleeping. This is often called a "Brain on Fire" situation (clinically known as PANS or PANDAS). It happens when the immune system gets confused after an illness and accidentally attacks the part of the brain that controls emotions and movement.

Why This Matters For You

- **Validation for Your Intuition:** If you feel like your child changed "overnight," you aren't imagining it. There is a biological reason for these shifts.
- **Calmer Days:** By cooling down the inflammation in the brain, we can help reduce "meltdowns," anxiety, and obsessive behaviors.
- **A Clear Path Forward:** Instead of just managing symptoms, we look for the "root cause"—like a hidden infection or a gut imbalance—to help your child feel like themselves again.

What You Can Do Today

1. **Try the "Big Three" Swap:** For the next few months, aim to remove **Gluten, Dairy, and Soy** from your child's diet. These foods can sometimes act like "brain fog" triggers, making it harder for the brain to heal.
2. **Boost "Brain Shield" Nutrients:** Focus on foods rich in **Zinc** (like pumpkin seeds or beef) and **Vitamin D** (the "sunshine" vitamin). These help "teach" the immune system to stay calm and not overreact to germs.
3. **Keep a "Mood & Food" Journal:** Note down any sudden changes in behavior and what your child ate or if they felt sick that day. This helps us see patterns that might be triggering a "flare."
4. **Create a "Safe Space" at Home:** Since these children often feel high levels of anxiety, keeping a calm, predictable routine at home helps lower their stress hormones while their brain heals.

Questions to Discuss with Your Practitioner

- "Could a past infection—like Strep or a cold—be the reason for these sudden behavioral changes?"
- "Can we look at a 'liquid biopsy' (Organic Acids Test) to see if gut health is affecting my child's mood?"
- "What are some kid-friendly, simple ways to start the Gluten-Free and Dairy-Free transition without causing more stress for our family?"

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