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## **What is Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal Infections (PANDAS)?**

Pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders associated with streptococcal infections (PANDAS) is a term for a disorder in children who have obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), tic disorders, or both and who suddenly develop symptoms or have symptoms worsen after being infected with “strep” bacteria (Group A beta-hemolytic streptococcus or Group A Strep). Although the mechanism behind this disorder is unclear, researchers are investigating whether PANDAS is an autoimmune disorder triggered by Group A Strep infection (such as strep throat).

### **Who gets PANDAS?**

PANDAS is most common in children younger than 13 years who have been infected with Group A Strep.

### **How is PANDAS spread?**

PANDAS is thought to be the result of an individual’s immune system response to Group A Strep infection. PANDAS is not spread from one person to another.

### **What are the symptoms of PANDAS?**

The symptoms of PANDAS include obsessive thoughts, compulsive behaviors and motor or vocal tics. These symptoms can be accompanied by a variety of other neuropsychiatric symptoms such as separation anxiety, moodiness/irritability, and anxiety attacks.

### **How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?**

Children who develop PANDAS usually have a sudden onset of symptoms. The symptoms usually become more intense within 24–48 hours after the onset of their Group A Strep infection.

### **How is PANDAS diagnosed?**

PANDAS is diagnosed by a healthcare provider after evaluating the patient. Although laboratory testing cannot identify PANDAS, it might identify a Group A Strep infection, which precedes PANDAS.

### **What is the treatment for PANDAS?**

If a Group A Strep infection is identified, antibiotics might be prescribed to kill the bacteria. Other treatment might be provided based on the patient’s clinical condition, including cognitive behavioral therapy or anti-obsessional medications.

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## **How can PANDAS be prevented?**

The likelihood of PANDAS is reduced by limiting the spread of Group A Strep. The spread of Group A Strep can be reduced by following these tips:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Wash your hands especially after coughing and sneezing, before and after caring for an ill person and before preparing foods and before eating.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or shirt sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact (such as kissing, hugging, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils) with people who are sick, and when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Persons with Group A Strep infections should stay home from work, school, or daycare until they have taken antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

A vaccine for Group A Strep is not available.

## **How can I get more information about PANDAS?**

- If you have concerns about PANDAS, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at the [VDH Local Health Districts page](#).
- Visit the National Institute of Mental Health websites at [NIMH's page on research](#) or [the National Institute of Mental Health's Q&A on PANDAS](#).

### **Resources**

- [PANS/PANDAS Evaluation and Treatment Algorithm](#)
- [PANDAS/PANS Parent Handout](#)
- [PANDAS/PANS School Systems Handout](#)
- [PANDAS/PANS Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

### **Reports**

- [2017 PANDAS/PANS Advisory Council Report to the General Assembly](#)
- [2018 PANDAS/PANS Advisory Council Report to the General Assembly](#)
- [2019 PANDAS/PANS Advisory Council Report to the General Assembly](#)

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