

PANS PANDAS & Restricted Eating

- It is estimated that 1 in 200 children have PANS PANDAS
- Roughly 50% of PANS PANDAS patients have Restrictive Eating



PANS/PANDAS Symptoms

- OCD
- Severe Food Restriction
- Anxiety, Separation Anxiety
- Mood Swings, Depression
- Irritability, Aggression, Severe Oppositional Behaviors
- Developmental Regression
- Deterioration in School Work: Math Skills, Handwriting Changes, ADHD, Executive Functioning, etc.
- Sensory & Motor issues, Tics
- Somatic Signs: Sleep Problems, Urinary Frequency

Restrictive eating is a major criteria of PANS. Roughly 50% of PANS patients will have some degree of restrictive eating, and about 17% result in life-threatening weight loss. Restrictive eating can include both food and fluids; it includes avoidance of particular foods and limiting the intake amount. People with PANS restrict eating due to disordered sensory hypersensitivity, obsessional fears, difficulty swallowing, decreased appetite, and body image issues. For many, food restrictions are firmly rooted in OCD, a primary PANS symptom; there are often fears of contamination/poisoning, vomiting, choking, or anaphylaxis. Another symptom of PANS PANDAS is sensory processing issues; hypersensitivity can lead to problems with texture, taste, and smell. Some patients have swallowing issues. A doctor can order a swallowing study if there are obsessional symptoms surrounding vomiting, choking to rule out a physical issue that may actually be prompting these fears. PANS PANDAS patients can have distorted body images, especially in patients who have PANS PANDAS for several years, so this is seen more often in older patients, but it can happen in younger patients.

Strategies for School

1. Communicate with family, providers, and therapists about specific therapeutic strategies
2. Be flexible about the time it takes to eat - May need longer breaks
3. Do not draw attention when a student eats the same foods repeatedly
4. Allow frequent snacks to ensure adequate calories
5. Be flexible on healthy food school policies if a student is self-restricted to foods not on the list
6. Do not pressure to eat more or take a bite
7. Provide anytime pass or alternate activity if a student's restrictive eating prevents them from participating in food-related activities
8. Provide anytime pass to access the bathroom

