

FROM DR. JEANNE OH, MD, FAAP

The 2-Minute Gut–Brain Check

For toddlers to teens: a quick look at gut, focus, mood, and sleep. Because your child is more than a diagnosis.

Step 1 · Check any that sound like your child lately

GUT & BODY

- ☐ Complains of stomach aches
- ☐ Has constipation, loose, or irregular stools
- ☐ Eats only a short list of “safe” foods
- ☐ Gets sick often, or has eczema or allergies

FOCUS, MOOD & SLEEP

- ☐ Struggles to focus or finish tasks
- ☐ Worries a lot, or has big meltdowns
- ☐ Has trouble falling or staying asleep
- ☐ Gets moody or “hangry” between meals

Why gut and brain together? They talk all day long, through the vagus nerve, the immune system, and messengers made by the gut’s microbes. When one is out of balance, the other often feels it.

Step 2 · What your checks mean

Checked 0–1?

Wonderful. Keep building strong foundations with the three habits below.

Checked 2 or more?

Your child’s foundations may be asking for a little attention. That’s worth a conversation, *not* a worry. Let’s talk it through together.



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Step 3 · Three habits to start this week — good for every child, whatever the score

1

Add a color to every plate

One fruit or veggie at every meal and snack. Add, don’t subtract: fiber feeds healthy gut microbes.

2

Make water the drink

Water at meals and in the lunchbox. Skip juice and sugary drinks. Hydration keeps things moving.

3

Screens off before bed

At least one hour before bed, and no electronics in the bedroom. Sleep is when brain and gut repair.

This checklist is for education only and is not a diagnosis or a substitute for your child’s regular medical care. If you are ever worried about your child’s safety or mental health, call your pediatrician, or call or text 988 any time.

“Not obsessive, just mindfully aware. Small, steady steps build strong foundations.”

Blessings, Dr. Oh