

# What Is the Perfect Storm?

In recent years, parents and healthcare professionals have been grappling with an alarming trend: the skyrocketing rates of chronic illness among children.

It is estimated that 20% of children in the United States have special healthcare needs, and over 40% of school-aged kids have a chronic condition. Trends like these continue to rise.

From autism and ADHD to allergies and autoimmune disorders, today's children are facing an unprecedented array of health challenges that can impact every aspect of their lives.

But what is causing this epidemic of pediatric illness, and what can be done to address it?

The answer lies in understanding something we call "The Perfect Storm." This term refers to a series of factors, including fertility challenges, prenatal stress, birth trauma, environmental toxins, and nervous system dysfunction, that can set the stage for developmental delays and chronic health problems in children.

**20%** of U.S. children have special healthcare needs

**40%+** of school-aged children have a chronic condition

**1 in 36** children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder



**Van Every Family Chiropractic Center**

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## Understanding The Perfect Storm

In this guide, we cover everything about "The Perfect Storm" and explore how this series of events can affect your child's health and development. We also discuss the crucial role of the nervous system in regulating overall health, and introduce you to the power of neurologically-focused chiropractic care as a drug-free, non-invasive approach to addressing the root causes of chronic illness.

It is time to stop blaming genetics and bad luck, but also to let parents know the truth that it is not simply exposure to gluten and environmental toxins either. There is more to the story. Our genetics take thousands of years to change, and toxins have been around for multiple generations. And it is not enough to say we are simply "diagnosing" things like autism and anxiety better. Chronic illness in our kids is rising, and it is time we dig deeper and get to the real root causes, instead of continuing to just scratch the surface.

If you are a parent searching for answers, we have them. By the end, you will have a clear understanding of "The Perfect Storm" and how it can impact your child's health, as well as practical steps you can take to help your child thrive. So let's get started.

The term "Perfect Storm" refers to a combination of factors that, when occurring together, create a situation that is much worse than each factor alone. In pediatric health, "The Perfect Storm" describes a convergence of stressors that can disrupt a child's nervous system development and lead to chronic illness.

The "Perfect Storm" framework consists of:

1. Fertility challenges
2. Prenatal stress
3. Birth interventions
4. Frequent exposure to toxins, including the overuse of antibiotics and other medications
5. Compromised gut microbiome and immune system function

Each of these builds from one to the next until you have a child with an overworked, dysfunctional, and dysregulated nervous system. This leads to disrupted and delayed neurological and brain development during the most sensitive or critical periods of development, starting as early as the in-utero period and then continuing through the crucial infant, toddler, and early childhood stages.

Common conditions that typically occur with a "Perfect Storm" include:

- Colic
- Constipation
- Chronic ear infections
- Missed milestones and developmental delays
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Sensory processing disorder
- Emotional regulation and mental health conditions like anxiety

Let's take a deeper, evidence-based look at each step of the "Perfect Storm."

### Fertility Challenges and Chronic Health Issues in Kids Later in Life

Recent studies continue to show a link long observed in clinical practice: that infertility and interventions like IVF can increase the risk of autism and suboptimal neurodevelopment in children later in life.

We now know that these fertility challenges, medical interventions, and many other factors during the fertility and prenatal journey can affect fetal development and, most especially, the formation and functioning of the autonomic nervous system and vagus nerve. The autonomic nervous system and vagus nerve are essential for maintaining balance and optimal neurodevelopment throughout every stage of life, so any disruption to their development is likely to have effects throughout childhood.

### The Role of Prenatal Stress and Maternal Health

One key component of "The Perfect Storm" is prenatal stress and maternal health. Research has shown that high levels of stress during pregnancy can have a profound impact on fetal development, increasing the risk of conditions like ADHD, autism, and anxiety later in life.

Well-established research published in 2009 found that maternal stress during pregnancy can alter the development of the fetal nervous system, leading to changes in brain structure and function. These changes can make children more susceptible to neurodevelopmental disorders and mental health challenges.

## Stressors That Build The Storm

### Birth Trauma and Interventions

Another critical factor in "The Perfect Storm" is birth trauma and interventions, such as C-sections, forceps delivery, and vacuum extraction. These procedures can cause stress and injury to the delicate tissues of the head, neck, brainstem, and spine, leading to subluxation, which is better understood as neurological interference or dysfunction within the neurospinal system. Subluxation disrupts the communication between the brain and body, causing nervous system dysregulation and overall imbalance, known as dysautonomia. This interference affects the body's ability to maintain balance, respond to stress, and develop properly, contributing to a wide range of health issues and developmental delays in children.

We will dive deeper into subluxation and dysautonomia later. These are two important factors that lead to the "Perfect Storm" and are often overlooked by traditional pediatric medical testing.

A recent analysis shows that 80% of babies born via C-section grow up to have sensory issues. The global C-section rate has risen significantly, from about 7% in 1990 to 21% today, and is projected to reach 29% by 2030.

### Environmental Toxins, Medications, and the Toxic Load Theory

In addition to prenatal stress and birth trauma, environmental toxins and the overuse of medications in early childhood can also contribute to "The Perfect Storm." Exposure to toxins like heavy metals, pesticides, and air pollution has been linked to an increased risk of neurodevelopmental disorders like autism, immune dysfunction, and other chronic health problems.

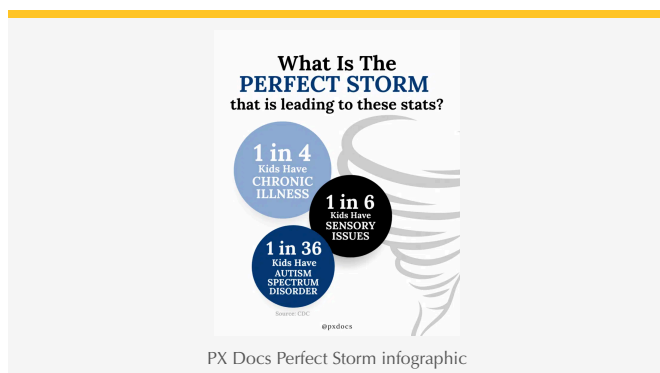
Overusing antibiotics and other medications in early life can also disrupt the delicate balance of the gut microbiome, which plays a crucial role in immune function and nervous system development. A 2019 study suggests that exposure to antibiotics in the first 24 months of life can affect neurocognitive outcomes, like cognitive function, hyperactivity, impulsivity, emotional regulation, and anxiety, at 11 years of age.

### The Impact on Gut Health and Immune Function

The combined effects of prenatal stress, birth trauma, environmental toxins, and antibiotic overuse can have a profound impact on a child's gut health and immune function. When the gut microbiome is disrupted, it can lead to a cascade of health problems for your child, including digestive issues, allergies, autoimmune disorders, and neurological conditions.

Research has shown a strong connection between gut health and brain function, known as the gut-brain axis. A 2023 review showed that children with ASD and ADHD share distinct gut bacteria profiles. It is also well-documented that there is a link between gut health and conditions such as anxiety and depression.

By understanding the complex interplay of factors that contribute to "The Perfect Storm," parents can take steps to support and address chronic illness in children. In the next section, we explore the nervous system's critical role in regulating health and development, and how neurologically-focused chiropractic care can help children thrive.



## The Neurological Connection

To fully understand how "The Perfect Storm" can lead to chronic health issues in children, it is essential to recognize the nervous system's critical role in overall health and development. The nervous system consists of two main components:

- The central nervous system (CNS), which includes the brain and spinal cord.
- The autonomic nervous system (ANS), which regulates involuntary functions like heart rate, digestion, and immune response.

### Subluxation and Its Impact on Nervous System Function

From a neurologically-focused chiropractic viewpoint, subluxation is defined as a neurological dysfunction that occurs when misalignment, tension, and restricted mobility build up within the neurospinal system, interfering with communication between the brain and body. This interference disrupts the body's ability to regulate and adapt to its environment, leading to an imbalance in the autonomic nervous system and a range of physical, mental, and emotional health challenges.

Key components include:

- **Misalignment and limited motion:** improper alignment and restricted movement patterns within the neurospinal system alter and disrupt sensory and motor input into the brain and nervous system.
- **Neurological interference:** disruption in the flow of neurosensory signals between the brain and body, often impacting vital functions such as digestion, immune response, motor tone and coordination, and behavioral and emotional regulation.
- **Autonomic imbalance (dysautonomia):** the interference caused by subluxation often shifts the body into a state of sympathetic dominance, where the fight-or-flight response is overactive and suppresses the parasympathetic (rest and digest) system. This imbalance of the autonomic nervous system can lead to a range of acute and chronic health challenges and is known as dysautonomia.
- **Multi-system dysfunction:** subluxation and dysautonomia can lead to dysfunction in multiple systems of the body, including immune, digestive, endocrine, motor, and emotional regulation, as the nervous system struggles to maintain balance.

In essence, subluxation in neurologically-focused chiropractic care is viewed not just as a structural issue in the spine, but as a deeper disruption in the body's ability to communicate, adapt, and heal naturally.

### Dysautonomia: The Result of "The Perfect Storm"

When the nervous system is subjected to the multiple stressors of "The Perfect Storm," it can result in a condition called dysautonomia. Dysautonomia refers to a dysfunction of the autonomic nervous system, which can cause an imbalance

between the sympathetic "fight or flight" response and the parasympathetic "rest and digest" response.

Because the vagus nerve is such an essential component of the parasympathetic system and overall autonomic regulation, dysautonomia also involves vagus nerve dysfunction and altered vagal tone.

Symptoms of dysautonomia can include:

- Chronic fatigue
- Dizziness and fainting
- Digestive problems
- Anxiety and depression
- Sleep disturbances
- Immune dysfunction

Research has shown that children with neurodevelopmental disorders like autism and ADHD have a higher prevalence of dysautonomia, suggesting a strong link between nervous system dysfunction and these conditions.

Dysautonomia is also linked to seizures and epilepsy, as well as two rapidly emerging conditions, PANS and PANDAS. Each of these is known to be triggered or worsened by excessive sympathetic tone, and in turn by suppressed or exhausted vagus nerve and parasympathetic responsiveness.

### The Importance of the Vagus Nerve

One of the most critical components of the autonomic nervous system is the vagus nerve, the longest cranial nerve in the body. The vagus nerve plays a vital role in regulating many essential functions, including:

- Heart rate and blood pressure
- Digestion and gut motility
- Inflammation and immune response
- Mood and emotional regulation
- Sleep and rest

When the vagus nerve functions properly, it helps promote a state of relaxation and healing. However, when it is impaired due to subluxation or other stressors, it can contribute to a wide range of chronic health problems.

By understanding the neurological connection between "The Perfect Storm" and chronic health issues in children, parents can take a more targeted approach to prevention and care. In the next section, we explore some of the specific health challenges that can arise from nervous system dysfunction, and how neurologically-focused chiropractic care can help.

## How The Storm Can Show Up

When the nervous system is compromised due to the "Perfect Storm," children can develop a wide range of chronic health issues that affect multiple systems in the body. These challenges can significantly impact a child's quality of life and lead to ongoing struggles for the entire family.

Some of the most common health problems associated with nervous system dysfunction include:

### Digestive Issues

Digestive problems are among the most prevalent health challenges faced by children with subluxation and dysautonomia. When the autonomic nervous system is not functioning properly, it can disrupt the normal digestive process, leading to conditions such as:

- Constipation
- Acid reflux
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Food sensitivities and allergies

A 2016 study published in *Neurology* examined autonomic dysfunction in ASD and found that:

- Five out of six patients with ASD reported significant gastrointestinal symptoms, including constipation, diarrhea, and early satiety.
- All patients in the study showed signs of orthostatic intolerance, a form of autonomic dysfunction.
- Gastrointestinal motility testing was performed on two patients, with one showing signs of gastroparesis.

### Respiratory Problems

Children with nervous system dysfunction are also more susceptible to respiratory issues, such as:

- Asthma
- Allergies
- Chronic ear, nose, and throat infections
- RSV
- Croup
- Chronic cough
- Sleep-disordered breathing (for example, sleep apnea)

Subluxation can worsen these conditions by interfering with proper nerve communication to the respiratory system, and by contributing to excessive sympathetic responses and systemic inflammation. A 2001 study found that after three months of chiropractic care for pediatric asthma, children rated their quality of life substantially higher and their asthma severity lower.

### Neurodevelopmental Disorders

"The Perfect Storm" can also contribute to the development of neurodevelopmental disorders, such as:

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Sensory processing disorder (SPD)

- Learning disabilities

Research has shown that children with these disorders often have underlying nervous system dysfunction, which can be supported through neurologically-focused care.

There are numerous studies providing hopeful insights for caring for children with autism through neurologically-focused chiropractic care, which focuses on regulating the autonomic nervous system, supporting the vagus nerve, and improving the overall function of the nervous system.

### Mental Health Challenges

Nervous system dysfunction can also have a profound impact on a child's mental health, contributing to conditions such as:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
- Tic disorders

Dealing with these challenges can be difficult for children and families, as they often need a multifaceted approach. While talk therapy, counseling, and other drug-free interventions are very helpful, many families report they are not quite enough on their own to address the root cause of their child's mental and emotional struggles.

Many parents today also want to understand and support the root cause of their child's struggles, not just manage the symptoms. Medication has its place, and that is a conversation for you and your child's provider. Alongside it, it helps to look deeper. If we break the word "neurotransmitters" into two parts, "neuro" and "transmitters," it points to a deeper root: the health of the nervous (neuro) system and the communication (transmission) between the brain, body, and environment.

This is where neurologically-focused chiropractic care comes in. It seeks to address that deeper root, the neurological imbalance and interference, and help children see meaningful improvements in their quality of life. Many parents also report that once chiropractic adjustments begin to calm and regulate nervous system function, their child responds much better to talk therapy, deep breathing, and other stress-regulation strategies that were previously less successful.

### Autoimmune Conditions

Finally, the "Perfect Storm" can set the stage for the development of autoimmune conditions, such as:

- Celiac disease
- Type 1 diabetes
- Juvenile rheumatoid arthritis
- Pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorders associated with streptococcal infections (PANDAS)

These conditions occur when the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy cells in the body, leading to chronic inflammation and a wide range of symptoms.

By understanding the potential health challenges arising from the "Perfect Storm," parents can take proactive steps to support their child's nervous system function and overall well-being. In the next section, we explore how neurologically-focused chiropractic care can help support the root cause of these issues.

## The Van Every Solution

For parents seeking a drug-free, non-invasive approach to addressing the root causes of the "Perfect Storm," neurologically-focused chiropractic care offers a promising path. At Van Every Family Chiropractic Center, our doctors are specially trained in gentle, neurologically-focused pediatric care, and have helped families in the Royal Oak community for years.

Van Every is proud to be affiliated with PX Docs, a national network of pediatric chiropractors advancing this neurologically-focused approach to children's health. You can learn more about the framework and the research behind it at [pxdocs.com](http://pxdocs.com).

### Restoring Nervous System Function

The primary goal of neurologically-focused chiropractic care is to support proper function of the nervous system by addressing subluxation and dysautonomia. Through gentle, specific adjustments, our doctors work to reduce nerve interference, improve neurological regulation, and support healthy communication between the brain and body.

At Van Every, those adjustments are delivered with gentle, light-touch, nervous-system-focused techniques, including Talsky Tonal Chiropractic (TTC) and the Koren Specific Technique (KST), along with the Arthrostim instrument. There is no cracking, popping, or twisting, which makes our care comfortable and safe for children of every age, from newborns to teens.

### The Van Every Approach

What sets Van Every apart is a comprehensive, personalized approach to pediatric chiropractic care. This approach includes:

- **Neurological assessments:** we use objective technology, including INSIGHT scans, to assess your child's nervous system function and identify areas of subluxation and dysautonomia. The scans are painless, non-invasive, and use no radiation.
- **Personalized care plans:** based on the results, we develop an individualized care plan tailored to your child's unique needs and goals.
- **Gentle, specific adjustments:** our doctors are trained in gentle, low-force techniques that are safe and effective for children of all ages, including infants and toddlers.

### Real-Life Stories of Hope

The impact of neurologically-focused chiropractic care on children's health is best illustrated through the families we serve. Many of our patients share how care has helped their child, and you are welcome to read their stories in our patient reviews.

These stories show the potential for gentle, neurologically-focused chiropractic care to help children affected by the "Perfect Storm" feel better and thrive.

You can also hear experts and parents share messages of hope and healing on the Experience Miracles Podcast with Dr. Tony Ebel.

### Recognizing the Signs and Seeking Early Support

One of the most important things you can do as a parent is to be aware of the signs and symptoms of nervous system dysfunction, such as:

- A high-stress fertility and pregnancy period
- Birth interventions and trauma
- Developmental delays
- Early signs of autism
- Missed milestones
- Chronic ear infections
- Sleep and digestive challenges
- Sensory sensitivities
- Behavioral challenges
- Chronic illness

If you suspect your child may be struggling with the effects of the "Perfect Storm," seeking support early is key. Addressing these issues in the early stages of development can help your child build a healthier foundation.

### Getting Started at Van Every

Getting started is simple. When you bring your child to Van Every Family Chiropractic Center, you can expect a warm, welcoming environment and a collaborative relationship focused on your child's individual needs. During your first visit, our doctor conducts a thorough neurological assessment and discusses your child's health history, along with any concerns you have.

Based on this, we develop a personalized care plan that may include gentle chiropractic adjustments, lifestyle recommendations, and coordination with your other healthcare providers as needed. As you work together to follow the plan, you can expect ongoing communication, support, and periodic reassessments to track your child's progress.

To get started, call our Royal Oak office at 248.616.0900, or text the word SKED to 248-616-0900.

The "Perfect Storm" of prenatal stress, birth trauma, environmental toxins, and nervous system dysfunction has created a rising tide of chronic health challenges for today's children. But there is hope. By understanding the root causes of these challenges and seeking neurologically-focused pediatric chiropractic support, parents can help their children navigate the "Perfect Storm" and move toward better health and well-being.

At Van Every Family Chiropractic Center, we are committed to empowering parents with the knowledge, resources, and support they need to make informed decisions about their child's health. Our doctors are dedicated to helping children of all ages, and to caring for your whole family in a warm, friendly atmosphere.

If you suspect your child may be struggling with the impact of the "Perfect Storm," we encourage you to take the first step and schedule a visit. Together, we can help your child navigate these challenges and grow stronger, healthier, and more resilient.

Health and Happiness,

The Doctors and Staff at Van Every Family Chiropractic Center



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[perfectstorm.vaneverychiropractic.com](http://perfectstorm.vaneverychiropractic.com)



Scan for Dr. Tony Ebel on Spotify  
[open.spotify.com/episode/4rPiER8aqV3Ck9SUPEYVA1](https://open.spotify.com/episode/4rPiER8aqV3Ck9SUPEYVA1)

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