



BRIGHT WITHIN

a free guide for mothers

The Parent's Root-Cause Checklist

*A gentle starting point for digging deeper
into the symptoms you see in your child.*

Written by Dr. Bright
Education-based wellness • brightwithin.co

a letter from Dr. Bright

Before we begin,

Mama,

Before we walk through this checklist, I want you to know something. You are not doing this wrong. You are not behind. The very fact that you are here, asking questions, means you are already an incredible advocate for your child.

This checklist is not a diagnostic tool. It does not label your child, and it is not meant to replace your care team. What it does is invite you to look at your child's day-to-day life through a root-cause lens. A gut lens. A sleep lens. A nutrient lens. A stress lens. Because sometimes the thing driving a symptom is not found in the symptom itself. It lives upstream.

Walk through this at your own pace. Check off what stands out. Bring your answers to your next appointment as questions, not verdicts. And remember: this is a judgment-free space. There is no perfect-parent score at the end of this checklist.

You are already doing holy work by showing up.

With care,

Dr. Bright

how to use this

A gentle tool, not a test.

This guide is educational. It is not a diagnosis or treatment plan. Its purpose is to help you ask better questions and walk into your child's next appointment as an informed partner.

1. Read through each section slowly. You do not have to do it all in one sitting.
2. Place a check next to anything that fits your child, whether right now or across the past several months.
3. At the end of each section, use the notes lines to jot a few observations to bring to your next conversation with your child's care team.
4. Come back to this checklist as often as you need. Things change, and so will what stands out to you.

Seven root-cause areas to gently notice.

root-cause area one

Gut and Digestion

The gut is the hub of nutrient absorption, immune function, and nervous system signaling. When the gut is under strain, other symptoms can quietly follow.

- Irregular or difficult bowel movements (loose, hard, or infrequent)
- Frequent bloating, gas, or stomach pain
- Limited food variety, strong food preferences, or food refusal
- Reflux, spitting up, or burping after meals
- Frequent canker sores, oral thrush, or a coated tongue
- Rashes or eczema that flare with meals
- Mucus, stuffiness, or throat clearing after eating
- Visibly undigested food in stool

Notes for your next appointment

Sleep

Sleep is when the nervous system, immune system, and brain do the heavy repair work. Persistent sleep struggles can ripple into behavior, attention, and mood.

- Difficulty falling asleep (more than 30 minutes)
- Night waking, restless sleep, or very early morning waking
- Snoring, mouth breathing, or noisy breathing at night
- Night sweats, or kicking off the covers repeatedly
- Nightmares or night terrors
- Bedwetting past the typical age
- Wakes tired and feels crankier in the morning
- Needs motion, sound, or a parent nearby to stay asleep

Notes for your next appointment

root-cause area three

Nutrient Status

Growing bodies and brains need a steady supply of key nutrients. Small gaps in iron, vitamin D, zinc, magnesium, B vitamins, or omega 3s can show up as big symptoms.

- Pale skin, dark under-eye circles, or cold hands and feet
- Frequent cravings for a single food group (often carbs)
- Brittle hair, hair loss, or dry skin
- White spots on fingernails, ridged or peeling nails
- Low energy or low stamina for age
- Delayed growth or significant weight changes
- Frequent infections, or slow wound healing
- Picky eating with fewer than a few dozen total accepted foods

Notes for your next appointment

root-cause area four

Inflammation

Low-grade, chronic inflammation can quietly shift mood, attention, and sleep. It often shows up in small, repeated ways long before anything dramatic.

- Recurring ear infections, strep throat, or sinus flare-ups
- Asthma, allergies, or seasonal wheezing
- Eczema, hives, or other skin flare-ups
- Chronic nasal congestion or post-nasal drip
- Joint complaints or growing pains
- Dark circles or puffiness under the eyes
- Food reactions or sensitivities
- Flares after illness, stress, or seasonal shifts

Notes for your next appointment

root-cause area five

Environmental Inputs

Children today live in environments with more chemical, screen, and sensory inputs than any generation before. Each one is small, but together they shape the load a body has to process.

- Fragranced products at home (laundry, candles, plug-ins, sprays)
- History of mold in any home your child has lived in
- Well water, old plumbing, or unfiltered tap water for drinking
- Daily screen time above age-appropriate guidance
- Limited daily time outside in natural light
- Sleeps near devices, bright screens, or Wi-Fi routers
- Regular exposure to smoke (tobacco, wildfire, wood-burning)
- Frequent use of strong cleaning chemicals indoors

Notes for your next appointment

root-cause area six

Stress and Nervous System

A child's nervous system is still forming. Chronic stress, sensory overwhelm, and unprocessed big feelings can show up in very physical ways.

- Big emotions that feel disproportionate to the trigger
- Startles easily, with a quick fight-or-flight response
- Difficulty transitioning between activities
- Self-soothing behaviors (rocking, biting, pulling)
- Freezes or shuts down in busy environments
- Stomachaches or headaches before stressful events
- Needs extra routine or predictability to feel safe
- Strong feelings around new foods, clothes, or textures

Notes for your next appointment

Sensory and Motor

Sensory input and motor milestones are a window into how the brain is organizing information. Small observations are worth noting.

- Delayed pointing, waving, or gesture milestones
- Delayed language milestones
- Walking on toes, a wide stance, or frequent falls
- Hyper- or hypo-responsive to sound, touch, or smell
- Seeks deep pressure, crashing, spinning, or jumping
- Avoids certain textures in food, clothing tags, or fabrics
- Struggles with fine motor tasks (buttons, utensils, pencil grip)
- Strong preference for routine or sameness

Notes for your next appointment

bringing it together

What to do with your answers.

Look for patterns.

Which sections had the most checks? Those areas are often worth paying attention to first.

Choose one area to explore first.

You do not have to dig into all seven at once. Start where the signal feels strongest.

Bring your notes as questions.

For example: "I've noticed [observation] at home. Could we look at [lab, referral, or area of inquiry]?"

Be gentle with yourself.

Progress is the goal. Not perfection. Come back to this checklist whenever something shifts.

Your body is speaking to you.

Your child's body is too.

You do not have to have it all figured out to start listening.

stay close

Keep learning with us.

Bright Within is an education-based wellness platform for women, and for the parents raising neurodivergent children. We send gentle, weekly-ish notes on root-cause education. No hype, no fear, no shame. Just real education, in plain language.

Website brightwithin.co
Facebook Brightwithinwellness.co
Instagram @brightwithin_wellness
TikTok @brightwithin_wellness

Disclaimer

Bright Within provides education and wellness support only. We do not provide medical diagnosis or treatment. The information in this guide is educational and is not a substitute for advice from your physician or other qualified health provider.

© 2026 Bright Within. All rights reserved.