Fact or Fiction?

Vaccines Do **Not** Cause Autism



Autism Is a Normal Part of Human Diversity

Autism is a developmental difference that affects how people communicate, experience the world, and process sensory information. Autism is a normal part of human diversity. Like other human differences, it presents uniquely in each individual.

Research suggests autism develops before birth through genetics and influences that occur during pregnancy.

One Fraudulent Study Sparked Enduring Doubt

Concerns about a potential link between vaccines and autism began with one 1998 study of just 12 children. The study suggested a link between the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism. However, investigations into the study have since revealed the author changed the data to produce this conclusion and concealed untrustworthy motives.

Before the study was published, Wakefield accepted money from lawyers and parents building a case against vaccine manufacturers. He was also developing his own measles vaccine, incentivizing him to cast doubt on the existing MMR vaccine. Wakefield also altered data, changing participants' medical records to show a short time between vaccination and an autism diagnosis.

In 2010, the publishing medical journal retracted Wakefield's study. The journal called several elements of the paper and its conclusions "utterly false." That same year, the General Medical Council in the UK took away Wakefield's medical license, citing multiple instances of wrongdoing in the study.

Several Large Studies Have Disproven This Myth

Dozens of studies have disproven Wakefield's findings and found no link between vaccines and autism. Despite this, Wakefield's study planted a seed of doubt about the safety of the MMR vaccine that has lasted for decades.

Researchers have spent millions of dollars studying whether a connection exists between the MMR vaccine and autism. None of these studies have found a link. The evidence is clear: vaccines and vaccine ingredients do not cause autism.

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It's a Matter of Timing

After a diagnosis, parents and caregivers may wonder what caused autism in their child.

Children receive the MMR vaccine around 12-15 months. This is the same age when children begin to show diagnosable signs of autism. Because of this timing, caregivers might think the vaccine is connected to their child's autism diagnosis.

From 1-2 years old,

- children begin speaking.
- social interaction becomes more complex.
- autism traits often become easier to recognize.
- children receive their first dose of MMR vaccine.

But many studies have shown there is no link between autism and vaccines.

In fact, some studies suggest autism signs are detectable long before children receive the MMR vaccine, as young as 2-3 months old.

Increases Can Be Explained By Diagnosis Developments

In the past couple of decades, the rate at which children are diagnosed with autism has increased. Some people blame vaccines, even though multiple studies exploring a possible connection between vaccines and autism have found that there is no link.

Instead researchers attribute these increases to

- Expanded diagnostic criteria resulting from greater awareness about how autism presents
- Increased access to autism evaluations
- Combined categorization of multiple diagnoses under "Autism Spectrum Disorder"

Rather than a rise in the prevalence of autism, it's more likely that parents, teachers, and doctors are better able to recognize autism traits and help children get diagnosed.

The MMR Vaccine is Safe, But Measles is Dangerous

Researchers test vaccines and vaccine ingredients across age groups for safety before approving them for recommendation.

Measles is a high-risk infectious disease that can lead to pneumonia, brain inflammation, hearing loss, and death.

Every year in the U.S. before the MRR vaccine,

- measles infected 3–4 million Americans.
- hundreds died from measles.
- thousands were hospitalized.
- nearly every child was infected before 15.

Measles cases have risen in the U.S. to the highest levels since it was declared eliminated 26 years ago. It's more important now than ever that children receive lifelong protection through vaccination.

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