

Vaccines & autism:

The facts

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a brain disorder that happens while the brain is developing. It can cause challenges with social, communication and behavioral skills.

Although experts don't know all the causes of autism, they do know one thing: vaccines and autism are not linked.

Vaccines are safe.



Still, some people believe that vaccines cause autism. This may be due to a report from 1998 that said there was a link between them. However, the doctor who was responsible for the report used a study that was small and flawed. The study had errors and problems. The doctor's license was later revoked.



THE CAUSES OF AUTISM

Sometimes, a child gets diagnosed with autism around the time of getting vaccines. This can make it seem like the vaccines caused autism.

Medical experts say there is no link to vaccines and autism. Numerous studies found that children who get vaccines are not more likely to get autism than children who don't get vaccines. Although experts have spent years looking for a link between the two, they have not found one.

There is no single cause of autism. Experts think that genetics and things in the environment might combine to increase a child's risk.

THIMEROSAL AND SAFETY

Some vaccines contain a preservative called thimerosal. Thimerosal contains small amounts of mercury. Some people thought thimerosal could be causing autism.

Experts removed thimerosal from most childhood vaccines just to be safe. However, even after thimerosal was removed from vaccines, cases of autism did not go down. Experts found that kids who had vaccines which contained thimerosal did not have a higher risk of autism.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

If you ever have questions about your child's vaccines, ask your doctor. They can give you the facts and evidence about vaccines so you can make an informed choice. Don't rely on information on the Internet, which may not be true. It could even put your child's health at risk.

Source: Autism Speaks, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention