



Autism Facts

Autism is a complex, life-long biological disorder of development that results in social interaction problems, communication difficulties, and restrictive or repetitive interests and behaviors. The prevalence of autism estimates run from approximately one in 500 children, to 1 in 1,000 children, who might be affected by some form of the disorder.

Autism can be reliably diagnosed by or before age 3. Parents and expert clinicians can usually detect symptoms during infancy, although a formal diagnosis is generally not made until the child fails to develop functional language by age 2. Approximately 20 percent of children with autism reportedly experience a "regression"; that is, they have apparently normal development followed by a loss of communication and social skills.

Boys are three to four times more likely to be affected by autism than girls. Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups.

Although there is currently no known cure for autism, it is treatable. Persons with autism can make progress if they receive appropriate, individual intervention. Pre-school children who receive intensive, individualized, behavioral interventions show remarkable progress. In addition, limited pharmacological interventions are available to treat specific symptoms of autism.

Is there a relationship between autism and vaccines?

To date there is no conclusive evidence that any vaccine increases the risk of developing autism or any other behavior disorder.

Several epidemiological studies show no causal association between the measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine (or other measles-containing vaccines) and autism. In January 1990, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) concluded that there was no evidence to indicate a causal relationship between autism and the diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis (DTP) vaccine or the pertussis component of the DTP vaccine. In 2001, the IOM concluded that there is no causal relationship, at a population level, between the MMR vaccine and ASDs.

Currently, no study provides definitive evidence of an association between autism and vaccines. However, continued research is needed to examine the mechanisms of autism and any possible relationship to vaccines.

Resources

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Clearinghouse
(800) 370-2943
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>.

National Library of Medicine's MEDLINEPlus <http://medlineplus.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/autism.html>.

Center for Disease Control's Division of Birth Defects, Child Development, and Disability and Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dd/>

National Immunization Program
(800) 232-2522 (English) or (800) 232-0233 (Spanish)
<http://www.cdc.gov/nip>

Source: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development