

Addressing Questions About Vaccines and Autism

What is autism?

Autism is generally a life-long condition that affects how people talk, play, and learn. Autistic people might act differently, like doing the same thing over and over or having trouble talking to others. Some people with autism need a lot of help, and some need just a little.

Why do people ask if vaccines cause autism?

In 1998, a doctor wrote a paper that said the MMR vaccine might cause autism. A lot of people saw this on the news. But later, it was found that the paper had false information. Most of the doctors who helped write it said they didn't want their names on it anymore. The doctor lost his license. Since then, many other scientists did studies to see if vaccines cause autism.

All the studies showed the same thing: **Vaccines do NOT cause autism.**

Why are vaccines important?

Vaccines keep us safe from serious diseases like measles and polio. Measles spreads very easily. If 10 people are near someone with measles, 9 of them will get sick if they're not vaccinated. Measles can make you very sick and even cause death. Children are especially susceptible to measles. That's why doctors say people need vaccines—to keep everyone healthy.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Vaccines go through multiple rounds of testing to make sure they are safe. The MMR vaccine has been used since 1971. If you have questions, ask your doctor. It's best to get your facts from people who really know and understand the topic, like trusted doctors and not just from the internet.

What causes autism?

We don't know all the causes of autism in all individuals with it. We do know many things can be involved like their genes or things that happened before they were born. Scientists know that autism runs in families, which means genes play a big part. Some genes that have been linked to autism are inherited, or passed on from parents. This could be why there is a higher recurrence of autism among siblings. Other things, like the age of the parents or problems during pregnancy, like gestational diabetes, may also matter.