

Do Vaccines Cause Autism?

By Lydia Greene, Back to the Vax

Short Answer: No. Wow, that was easy. (kidding).

Long Answer: Here is how I realized that **vaccines do not cause autism** from the lens of a former anti-vax parent. I have 3 children, and I stopped vaccinating when my oldest was just 4 months old. My next 2 children were completely unvaccinated. Being in the anti-vax crowd led me to have the wrong idea of what autism is. Parents in these groups blamed vaccines on almost everything. They promised that if you just avoided vaccines, you would have the perfect neurotypical child. The way they talked about autism made me think it was one of the worst things that could befall a child. All I knew about autism was negative. They said it would ruin your family, your marriage, and your life.

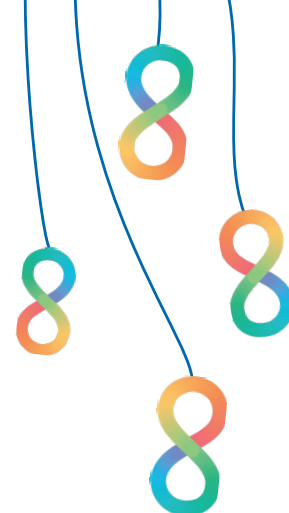
When the pandemic started, a lot of events made me question my stance on vaccination. Realizing I was truly wrong about something I believed wholeheartedly for so many years made me question what else I could be wrong about. After seeing with my own eyes that my children were just fine after their first vaccinations, I moved forward to catch them up as fast as I could. It began to occur to me - *if the well-meaning people in my life were right about vaccines, what if they were right about other things?* Memories came back about the times that family members and preschool teachers suggested that my son could be autistic or developmentally delayed. At the time, I was so offended. My son is beautiful, unique, and perfect the way he is. He may be a little behind, but he does not have autism. He is none of the things the parents in those groups talked about. He is an absolute joy to be around. Could he be all these things and autistic at the same time? I didn't know, but I decided to call our doctor and voice my concerns. Our doctor did some simple behavioral tests in her office, and we booked an assessment. She told me to brace myself for an autism diagnosis. She was right. He was diagnosed with level 2 autism spectrum disorder under the DSM-5.



My unvaccinated boy was in fact, autistic.

The “vaccines cause autism” myth gained momentum with the infamous, fraudulent Wakefield study from the 1990s. The study was retracted in 2010, but the myth has remained. I can see why. Autism seems as if it occurs at random, and regression is traumatic for parents to witness. People need a reason, because it gives us a sense of control in a chaotic world. Science has done a wonderful job in proving that vaccines are completely unrelated to autism. A recent Danish study (Hviid et al. 2019) with over 650,000 children concluded that MMR was not associated with an increase in autism, using data from siblings that have and have not been vaccinated.

I vaccinated my other son at age 2 and he did not develop autism. I know this is an anecdote, but my anecdote is supported by science. Some claim the Danish study only looked at MMR, but there was a group of 4,729 completely unvaccinated children in the study and the results were the same. Vaccines don't cause autism. In another study researchers also found the same result. They collected data from 904 autistic children and found no association between MMR and autism (Uchyama et al. 2007).



While it does seem that autism is on the rise with 1 in 54 children (CDC, 2020) being diagnosed, the rise may not be as dramatic as portrayed. In truth, most of the rise is not actually due to an increase in the incidence of autism itself. Updates in diagnostic criteria now capture cases sooner so early intervention can occur. The DSM-5 has changed the way autism is diagnosed. Other neurological conditions now fall under the autism spectrum disorder umbrella. These children used to be diagnosed as mentally retarded, globally delayed, antisocial, and even schizophrenic.

Autism tends to become apparent at approximately the ages that vaccinations are given to toddlers, so it's easy to make the false connection between the two. My son regressed around that time, despite being unvaccinated. I empathize strongly with any parents' struggle, but we must follow the evidence. Stopping vaccinations will not put an end to autism, but it will bring back numerous serious infectious diseases that will devastate society.



Reviewed by: Edward Nierenberg, Medical Student, Science Communicator and Founder of deplatformdisease.com

