



Autism and Vaccines: Studies Show No Link

by Brigitte Randle, M.D.



the diseases we vaccinate for are nearly eradicated, so why should their children get vaccinated. However, this is risky—the reason we don't commonly see conditions like polio, diphtheria and tetanus is because the vaccination is doing its job.

About Autism

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder, consists of multiple neuro-developmental problems that result in children not communicating in a normal fashion. We really don't understand why some children develop it and others don't, but there seems to be a clear genetic disposition and possibly some environmental triggers.

The symptoms of autism, which can include repetitive movements, inability to focus on people, and regressed or delayed speech development, typically present at around 1 ½ to 2 years of age, when parents expect to see a heightened communication ability as their children move from being babies to toddlers. Cases can be mild in nature or extremely serious, to the point that children are totally debilitated.

Because no clear-cut cause for autism has been found, research continues into how to treat the condition. Researchers are beginning to study drug therapies, but there's no miracle cure on the horizon, so more common avenues of treatment include occupational and speech therapy, physical therapy, neuropsychology and even dietary changes. There's also some conjecture that the environment has something to do with developing autism, in particular over-stimulation via TV, cell phones, etc., so lowering stress is often recommended.

It certainly makes sense for parents to want to protect their children from preventable illnesses. However, most physicians agree that it's more important to vaccinate children against potentially dangerous diseases like measles, meningitis and hepatitis than to withhold that protection due to fears about a connection between the vaccine and autism—something that simply hasn't been scientifically proven.

Appointments

Brigitte Randle, M.D., a board-certified pediatrician on affiliated with Sutter Solano Medical Center and member of the Solano Regional Medical Group, sees patients in our Vacaville care center. Appointments can be requested online or by calling 707-427-4900.

For more information on Autism screenings please call 707-427-4900 and make an appointment with one of our pediatricians.

You've certainly heard the saying that one bad apple spoils the whole bunch. The same might be true when it comes to the alleged correlation between childhood vaccines and the incidence of autism. If 100 studies say there's no link and one says there is, it seems the media—and thus some parents—tend to focus on the latter and ignore all the contradictory evidence.

This issue came about when researchers noticed a time correlation between when children receive their measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) and chicken pox vaccines and the symptoms of autism often present, at around 15-18 months. This is considered by physicians to be merely a coincidence, since no medical evidence exists to link the two events. A study published earlier this year concluded that there's no clear pattern of possible association between getting vaccinated and developing autism, but that hasn't stopped some parents from being concerned.

We've had several parents ask us to create alternative schedules to combat their fear of having their children get too many vaccines at once, and a few who've had to sign informed refusal sheets after they made the decision—against our counsel—to not vaccinate their children. Parents may reason that some of



Picture: Pediatrician Brigitte Randle, M.D., with young patient Alanna Vasconcelles