



City of San Antonio
San Antonio Metropolitan Health District

Metro Health

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Statement Regarding Association of Vaccines and Autism

SAN ANTONIO (Aug. 19, 2016) – The evidence is clear: thimerosal is not a toxin in vaccines, but merely a preservative, preventing contamination, that has been used in vaccines for decades. The fact that thimerosal is no longer used in vaccines and the autism rate is increasing supports further evidence that it is not the causative agent. The long ago debunked study in the 1998 issue of the journal Lancet was retracted for shoddy and misleading interpretation of scientific findings.

Vaccines are a public health success story. Before the middle of the last century, thousands of people died every year from now-rare diseases like polio, diphtheria and measles. But these diseases can suddenly return. From 2000 through 2014, 277 people died from whooping cough in the United States. Almost all the deaths (241 of the 277) were babies younger than 3 months of age, who are too young to be protected against whooping cough by getting the shots. **Vaccinations are not just for protecting ourselves—they also protect the people around us. Children cannot make the decision on getting vaccinated but informed parents can.**

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) states:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. People with ASD may communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people with ASD need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.

We do not know all of the causes of ASD. However, we have learned that there are likely many causes for multiple types of ASD. There may be many different factors that make a child more likely to have an ASD, including environmental, biologic and genetic factors.

- Most scientists agree that genes are one of the risk factors that can make a person more likely to develop ASD.
- Children who have a sibling with ASD are at a higher risk of also having ASD.
- ASD tends to occur more often in people who have certain genetic or chromosomal conditions, such as fragile X syndrome or tuberous sclerosis.
- When taken during pregnancy, the prescription drugs valproic acid and thalidomide have been linked with a higher risk of ASD.
- There is some evidence that the critical period for developing ASD occurs before, during, and immediately after birth.
- Children born to older parents are at greater risk for having ASD.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, U.S. Public Health Service, CDC, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), Food & Drug Administration, and Institute of Medicine's Immunization Safety Review Committee all have concluded that the evidence reviewed between 1999 and 2010 does not support an association between thimerosal-containing vaccines and autism.

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