

Stressful Myths and Autism

Myth Autism is caused by immunization of vulnerable children.

Reality Children not immunized with rubella, measles, mumps, hemophilic influenza, pneumococcal, and pertussis vaccines have high rates of developmental disabilities including deafness, blindness, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autistic spectrum disorders.

Myth Autism is a mental illness.

Reality Autism is a developmental disability impacting on understanding and use of language, complex learning, and social communication

Myth Autism is caused by problems during labor and delivery.

Reality Prematurity and neonatal complications have not been scientifically linked to autism. Major known etiologies associated with autism include phenylketonuria, tuberous sclerosis, congenital rubella, fragile X syndrome, chromosomal disorders, and severe retinopathy of prematurity.

Myth Children with autism cannot learn.

Reality Children with autism have strengths in motor skills, fine motor manipulative skills, nonverbal intelligence, and basic adaptive skills. There is a range of communicative, cognitive, and complex adaptive abilities. All children with autism learn.

Myth Autism is caused by poor parenting.

Reality Autism is a neurobiological disorder whereby brain systems integrating language, complex learning, and social communication are underdeveloped.

Myth Experimental alternative medical treatments involving specialized diets, megavitamins, and natural therapies can cure autism.

Reality Autism is not caused by food, allergies, or malabsorption. The best treatments for autism are special education programs that build on a child's strengths, provide family supports, and comprehensively address communicative, learning, and behavior challenges. Children with autism with gastrointestinal concerns should receive competent pediatric care.

Myth There is no role for pediatric medicine for children with autism.

Reality All children require a medical home that monitors growth and development, identifies sensory, neurological, and health conditions that can interfere with progress, helps set comprehensive goals that optimize adaptive functioning, and advocates for proactive community programs that provide quality family supports.

Information Cited from:

Gray, MA, Larry A., Emily R. Msall, MA, and Michael E. Msall, MD. "Communicating About Autism: Decreasing Fears and Stress Through Parent Professional Relationships." *Infants and Young Children* 21.4 (2008): 256-71 (pp258)