

# Autism Fact Sheet

collected by Barbara Boroson

This chart summarizes common questions about autism and presents facts using concise, research-aligned answers from reputable medical or scientific sources.

## Prevalence

| Question                                    | Answer     | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Is the prevalence of autism really 1 in 31? | <b>Yes</b> | Studies have shown that this high prevalence should not be interpreted as indicative of the presence of more autistic people. Instead, the American Academy of Pediatrics attributes the increase to the fact that society is getting much better at identifying and diagnosing autism. This is due to a significant broadening of the diagnosis, greater public awareness, universal screening of all toddlers, and a better understanding of previously undiagnosed cohorts such as Black, Brown, and Asian-American children. |
| Is autism an epidemic?                      | <b>No</b>  | An epidemic happens when a <i>germ infects</i> lots of people with a <i>disease</i> that then <i>spreads</i> throughout a community. As affirmed by the Autism Society of America, autism is NOT caused by germs, does NOT infect people, is NOT a disease, and does NOT spread. Autism is a lifelong, innate, neurodevelopmental <i>condition</i> that affects how individuals perceive the world, communicate, and interact with others.                                                                                       |
| Does autism affect only boys?               | <b>No</b>  | Global health data collected by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, confirms that autism spans all genders equally, though masking behaviors have led girls to be missed or underdiagnosed. The identification of more biological girls has also contributed to the increase in diagnostic prevalence of autism.                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## Causes

| Question                                                | Answer     | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Can vaccines cause autism?                              | <b>No</b>  | Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition. Massive global data tracking over 5.6 million people synthesized by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) confirms there is no link between vaccines and autism.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Can taking Tylenol during pregnancy cause autism?       | <b>No</b>  | No proven causal link exists. Large-scale population tracking, analyzed by the Cleveland Clinic, shows no neurodevelopmental link, confirming that it remains safe—even essential, in some cases—for pregnant people to use as directed.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Can circumcision cause autism?                          | <b>No</b>  | Independent expert analysis reviewed via the Science Media Centre noted that studies suggesting a link are deeply flawed and that there is no causal connection between circumcision and autism.                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Do environmental factors have a role in causing autism? | <b>Yes</b> | The World Health Organization (WHO) outlines that specific, pre-natal environmental influences—such as advanced parental age, extreme prematurity, or severe birth complications—interact with genetic vulnerabilities.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Do genes have a role in causing autism?                 | <b>Yes</b> | Clinical research from the Mayo Clinic shows autism is primarily a genetic condition, with hundreds of different gene mutations altering early brain cell communication. Many individuals have a genetic predisposition or genetic vulnerability to autism, that is triggered by an environmental factor—such as advanced parental age, extreme prematurity, or severe birth complications. |
| Can parenting styles cause autism?                      | <b>No</b>  | The World Health Organization (WHO) defines autism as an innate, neurodevelopmental characteristic present from birth. It is not caused by parenting styles or choices. It is caused by the interplay of genetic and environmental factors. Parenting styles can and do affect how a child grows, learns, and thrives, but they can not <i>cause</i> autism.                                |

## Characteristics

| Question                                                                                  | Answer | Evidence                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Do individuals on the autism spectrum avoid making friends because they do not want them? | No     | Longitudinal peer-reviewed research published in <i>Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice</i> , demonstrates that the vast majority of students on the autism spectrum express a strong desire for close friendships and connections, but encounter difficulties trying to navigate the nuances of social expectations. |
| Do all individuals on the autism spectrum have intellectual disabilities?                 | No     | Diagnostic criteria and clinical tracking from the World Health Organization (WHO) demonstrate that intellectual capacity varies completely across the spectrum, with many individuals possessing average to superior intelligence, whether or not they have the ability to communicate with spoken-language.                                |
| Is every individual on the autism spectrum a savant with an extraordinary skill?          | No     | Clinical data reported in World Psychiatry indicates that while remarkable visual or memory strengths often occur, genuine savant abilities are relatively rare. Most individuals on the spectrum have a highly unique compilation of typical strengths and difficulties.                                                                    |

### Citations

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