

## Do vaccines cause autism? No, it's in the genes

Over the last few years, we've seen an explosion of studies linking autism to a wide variety of genetic and environmental factors. Putting these studies in perspective is an enormous challenge. In a database search of more than 34,000 scientific publications mentioning autism since its first description in 1943, over half have come since 2008.

A study published last week found that the brains of autistic children show abnormalities that are likely to have arisen before birth, which is consistent with a large body of previous evidence. Yet most media coverage focuses on vaccines, which do not cause autism and are given after birth. How can we help people separate real risks from false rumors?

For a variety of studies I asked the same question: How large is the increased risk for autism? My standard for comparison was the likelihood in the general population of autism spectrum disorder. Here's an example. Start from the fact that the recorded rate of autism is now 1 in 68, according to a report released last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If babies born in purple farmhouses have a rate of autism of 2 in 68, this doubling means that the purple farmhouse carries a risk ratio of 2. However, correlation is not causation, and there is no need to repaint that farmhouse just yet.

**Read the full, original story: [How to Think About the Risk of Autism](#)**