Vaccines do not cause autism. Here’s what science says does

It doesn’t help that doctors have long struggled to explain what exactly causes autism if vaccines don’t — many medical theories have been debunked and then replaced by new ones.

The strongest evidence of a cause: genetics

Autism spectrum disorder is a collection of close to 1,000 different conditions, with symptoms ranging from delayed speech development to asocial behavior and repetitive movements.

Exposure to infections and certain medicines during pregnancy may be linked to autism

In many cases, you need that underlying genetic predisposition or mutation to collide with a range of potential environmental triggers. And finding those environmental risk factors is where things get murky pretty quickly.

[T]here is relatively strong evidence linking a mother’s infection with the rubella virus during pregnancy to an increased risk of autism in her baby. The evidence for other viruses — such as influenza, or herpes — is much less clear, however.

There’s also pretty strong evidence that a mother’s use of the medicines thalidomide (originally used for morning sickness and now used to treat multiple myeloma and other diseases) and Valproic acid (for epilepsy and seizure control) seems to put babies at an increased risk of neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: What causes autism if vaccines don’t? A guide to researchers’ theories.