

'Illogical and inappropriate': How anti-vaxxers use 23andMe genetic tests to avoid vaccines

[San Francisco's city attorney subpoenaed](#) a doctor accused of giving illegal medical exemptions from vaccination, based on "two 30-minute visits and a 23andMe DNA test." On anti-vaccine blogs and websites, activists have been sharing step-by-step instructions for ordering 23andMe tests, downloading the raw data, and using a third-party app to analyze a gene called MTHFR. Certain MTHFR mutations, they believe, predispose kids to bad reactions to vaccines, possibly even leading to autism—[a fear unsupported by science](#).

This interest in MTHFR can be traced right back to [biologist David] Reif's 2008 paper, which linked a variant of the gene to "adverse events" after smallpox vaccines. It was a somewhat intriguing result then. A decade later, however, [James Crowe](#), the senior author of the paper and the director of the Vanderbilt Vaccine Center, offers a blistering assessment of his own study: "It's just not even a valid study by today's methodology." To use it for granting vaccine exemptions now, he says, is "illogical and inappropriate."

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At a time when [companies are hawking](#) (unproven) DNA-based diets, supplements, and exercise routines, of course people are wondering what genetics says about vaccines—even if the answer is, currently, not very much at all.

Read full, original post: [Why Anti-vax Doctors Are Ordering 23andMe Tests](#)