

Infographic: Understanding autism's origins and prevalence

More than 3.5 million Americans live with autism spectrum disorder — a developmental disability that has no blood test, no illness-causing virus, and no cure. Why are so many children diagnosed these days with the disorder and what can be done about it?

Stay informed. Don't fall for hysterical internet-borne rumors. And get involved with local groups and events that can help spread the word and help provide resources for autistic children and their parents, teachers and support circles.

autism causes

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Autism is thought to be connected to abnormal brain development in the brain cells in general and two key areas of the brain in particular:

how common is autism

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Why have the number of cases gone up so sharply over the past two decades? That's most likely due to "diagnostic substitution," autism researcher Paul Shattuck, an assistant professor of social work at Washington University in St. Louis, told WebMD. "A kid labeled autistic today could have been labeled mentally retarded 10 years ago in the same school system," Shattuck told the website.

These are estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, based on a biennial study of 8-year-old children in 11 monitoring sites across the U.S. The most recent data, released in December, run through 2014.

Read full, original post: [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)