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### CDC Statement on Vaccine Safety, Thimerosal and Autism

At the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention we understand that autism and autism spectrum disorders place a heavy burden on many families.

Despite compelling scientific evidence against a link between vaccines and autism, some parents wonder if vaccines could have caused their children to develop autism. The suggestion that MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine could be related to autism was initially raised in a 1998 article by Andrew Wakefield and colleagues. Several subsequent studies by independent researchers, however, have not found an association. A study that included the same laboratory that was involved in Wakefield's original studies was not able to replicate the original findings. Concerns have been raised about possible biases in the study by Wakefield, and 10 of the co-authors of the 1998 article have published a formal retraction of the article's conclusions. A review by the Institute of Medicine in 2004 concluded that the evidence indicates that MMR vaccine does not cause autism.

In early 2000, concerns were raised that thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative that had been used in some childhood vaccines, could cause autism. Numerous studies have found no association between thimerosal exposure and autism. Since thimerosal was removed from all U.S. childhood vaccines by 2002 (with the exception of the flu vaccine), we have not seen a decline in children being identified with autism, indicating that thimerosal is unlikely to be related to autism.

The CDC supports research to better understand the causes of autism and to develop more effective treatments. Early intervention is critical and research is our best hope for understanding the causes of autism. Through collaborations with partners in government, research centers, and the public, CDC is focusing on three areas: 1) understanding the frequency and trends of autism spectrum disorders, 2) advancing research in the search for causes and 3) improving early detection and diagnosis.

CDC places a high priority on vaccine safety and the integrity and credibility of our vaccine safety research. CDC, along with other federal agencies, is committed to assuring the safety of vaccines through rigorous pre-licensure trials and post-licensure monitoring. This commitment not only stems from our scientific and medical dedication, it is also personal--for most of us who work at CDC are also parents and grandparents. We too, are concerned about the health and safety of children.

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