

## **Autism: Fact and Fiction**

There's a lot of information floating on the Internet and other sources about autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Dr. Karen Fried, director of Developmental Pediatric Services at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center in Chicago, shares what's true and false behind some of these commonly held beliefs.

**Belief: Research has shown there is a definite link between early childhood vaccinations and autism.**

**False:** "Many large, well-controlled studies have looked at whether or not there's a link between childhood vaccinations and autism," Dr. Fried says. "Studies continue to show vaccines are not associated with ASD."

**Belief: The number of children diagnosed with autism is surging.**

**True.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2010, one in 68 children was diagnosed with ASD. In 2000, that number was just one in 150 children. The disorder is more common in boys than girls. Currently, it's estimated that one in 42 boys and one in 189 girls have been diagnosed with ASD.

**Belief: Children with autism don't have emotions—including joy, sadness or love—so they may be cold and not empathetic.**

**False.** "Children with ASD are children first and, therefore, have emotions," Dr. Fried says. "The manner in which they express those emotions may be different or unusual."

**Belief: Autism can be caused by poor parenting.**

**False.** In the 1950s, autism was thought to be caused by faulty parenting. Now, it's clear faulty parenting is not a cause of autism. Though the parenting theory still crops up from time to time, most researchers reject this theory as misguided and harmful, Dr. Fried says.

*Prayer: Tender and loving God, may we see your face in each beautiful and unique child.*

Wishing you joy and good health,  
Mary Bohlen RN  
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*Blood pressure readings have resumed. See us in the Infant & Toddler Room in the rear of church on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> full weekends of every month September – May.*

*The service is free of charge and currently is limited to those Masses that have a volunteer to perform readings. If you are trained in taking blood pressures and would like to offer your services, please contact Mary Bohlen using the e-mail address listed above - we'd love to have you on the team!*