

# IOM report: Thimerosal, MMR vaccine not linked to autism

Neither thimerosal nor the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine is associated with autism, according to a new report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies Immunization Safety Review Committee.

Further, the hypotheses regarding how the MMR vaccine and thimerosal could trigger autism lack supporting evidence and are theoretical only.

The report, *Vaccines and Autism*, is based on a thorough review of clinical and epidemiological studies and updates two earlier IOM reports, published in 2001. At that time, it was determined that the evidence did not show an association between the MMR vaccine and autism, but there was not enough evidence to determine whether thimerosal was associated with neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism.

The committee also reviewed evidence related to possible biological mechanisms by which immunizations might trigger autism, but said no evidence has yet been found that the immune system or its activation play a role in causing autism.

It reaffirms a previous recommendation to conduct studies to identify risk factors and biological markers of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in order to better understand genetic and environmental causes of ASD.

Today, with the exception of some flu vaccines, vaccines routinely given to young children either don't contain thimerosal or have trace amounts. Vaccine manufacturers are working to remove thimerosal from those flu vaccines that still contain the preservative.

The study is the eighth and final in a series on vaccine safety conducted by the IOM, a private, nonprofit institution that provides health policy advice under a congressional charter granted to the National Academy of Sciences.

The report is available on the [National Academies Press Web site](#).

