



For more than 20 years, researchers from Columbia University have run a long-term study on autism.

The study involved more than 115,000 children, and it investigated the causes of autism and possible ways to prevent it. According to scientists, strong genetic factors were part of it. The study involved blood and genetic testing and detailed health questionnaires.

It found three different factors caused autism which were certain genes, the environmental conditions, and the time of these events. Multiple circumstances created the conditions for autism. They were specifically inflammation in the body and a high fever during the second **trimester** of the pregnancy, when critical **neural pathways** develop in the unborn baby. The study showed that some children were at a lower risk of having autism if their mothers took **ibuprofen** to treat the fever.

It's estimated that one in 44 children in the US has been diagnosed with autism.

Difficult words: **trimester** (a period of three months), **neural pathway** (the nerves or the nervous system), **ibuprofen** (a drug that treats fever and pain).

Discussion Questions**Topic Talk**

1. Define the following words: *trimester*, *neural pathway* and *ibuprofen*
2. How long have researches from Columbia University been studying about autism?
3. What does the study focus on?
4. How did the scientists carry out the investigation?
5. What were the factors found that caused autism?
6. What were the circumstances found that created the conditions for autism?
7. Which drug lowers the risk of an unborn baby if the mother has a high fever during the second trimester?
8. How many children in the US have been diagnosed with autism?

Express Your Thoughts

1. How many children in your country have been diagnosed with autism?
2. How does your government raise awareness for autism? And why is it important?
3. Are individuals with autism given the same legal protection and equal benefit of the law without any discrimination in your country?