



ASERT Statement on the White House Announcement about Autism

The recent claims suggesting that the use of Tylenol (acetaminophen) during pregnancy causes autism and that leucovorin (folinic acid) is a helpful treatment for autism are not supported by scientific evidence.

Unproven claims such as these can cause harm to individuals with autism and their families and communities.

As a statewide collaborative, ASERT stands with the Pennsylvania autism community and with science. ASERT's mission is rooted in providing the highest quality resources and support to individuals with autism and their families across Pennsylvania.

ASERT remains committed to disseminating accurate, evidence-based information to the autism community across Pennsylvania. We are dedicated to ensuring that individuals with autism and their families continue to have access to high quality information, services, and support.

ASERT reaffirms its commitment to:

- improve access to quality services, data, and information;
- provide support, training and education in best practices; and
- facilitate the connection between individuals with autism, developmental disabilities, and special populations, families and key stakeholders at local, state, and national levels

WHAT WAS THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT TYLENOL AND AUTISM ALL ABOUT?

- ▶ There was a press conference held by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on September 22 during which a connection was made between Tylenol (acetaminophen) use during pregnancy and autism.
- ▶ This claim made by HHS is largely based on a review of 46 studies from Harvard/Mount Sinai. The results of this review were inconsistent and did not answer the question about causation.
 - You can read the full study [here](#)



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- ▶ The largest and most rigorous study on the use of Tylenol during pregnancy to date looked at 2.5 million children and found no increased risk among those exposed to Tylenol after properly accounting for genetics.
 - You can read the full study [here](#)
- ▶ Researchers have concluded that there is no sufficient evidence supporting a causal link between Tylenol (acetaminophen) use during pregnancy and autism.

DOES TYLENOL USE DURING PREGNANCY CAUSE AUTISM?

- ▶ There is not sufficient evidence supporting a causal link between Tylenol (acetaminophen) use during pregnancy and autism.
- ▶ Untreated fever and pain during pregnancy carry significant maternal and infant health risks. Untreated fever, particularly in the first trimester, increases the risk of miscarriage, birth defects, and premature birth, and untreated pain can lead to maternal depression, anxiety, and high blood pressure.
- ▶ The [Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#) continues to advise physicians and patients that acetaminophen is an appropriate medication to treat pain and fever during pregnancy.
- ▶ Autism researchers, scientists, self-advocates, and professional organizations have stated that there is not enough evidence to say that Tylenol use during pregnancy causes autism.
 - Here are statements from autism researchers and scientists:
 - [Coalition of Autism Scientists](#)
 - [Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#)
 - [Autism Science Foundation \(ASF\)](#)
 - [Autism Speaks](#)
 - Here are statements from self-advocate organizations:
 - [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)
 - Here are statements from professional and medical organizations:
 - [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#)
 - [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)
 - [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#)
 - [Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine](#)
 - [American Psychiatric Association \(APA\)](#)
- ▶ Acetaminophen remains recommended for use during pregnancy when medically necessary. Professional organizations, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), have reviewed the evidence and maintain that Tylenol is safe to use during pregnancy when used appropriately.
- ▶ We encourage people to refer to guidance from these organizations and to always talk to your doctor about safe treatment options.



WHAT ARE LEADERS IN PENNSYLVANIA SAYING?

- ▶ Governor Josh Shapiro on [X](#), 9/24/2025: “Here in Pennsylvania, we support our ID/A community. We’re going to continue to follow the science and facts to inform our public health guidance — all while investing in our direct support professionals and ensuring that folks in the ID/A community receive the care that they deserve.”
- ▶ State Rep. Abigail Salisbury (D-Allegheny), chair of the Pennsylvania Autism Caucus, [has called on state legislative leadership to convene official hearings](#) with scientific and medical experts to examine current research into the potential causes of autism.

HOW DOES PENNSYLVANIA SUPPORT THE AUTISM COMMUNITY?

- ▶ Pennsylvania provides [waiver services and programs](#) to help people live independently in their homes and communities. All waivers are managed by the [Office of Developmental Programs \(ODP\)](#).
- ▶ There are two waiver programs administered by the [Bureau of Supports for Autism and Special Populations \(BSASP\)](#) designed specifically to support adults with autism: the Adult Autism Waiver (AAW) and the Adult Community Autism Program (ACAP). AAW is available statewide and ACAP is available in Chester, Lancaster, Cumberland, and Dauphin counties.
- ▶ The PA [Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services \(OMHSAS\)](#) implements several behavioral health services to support people with autism across the Commonwealth, including Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) across a range of service categories in home, community, and school settings.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE CAUSES OF AUTISM? IS THERE A SINGLE CAUSE?

- ▶ Autism is complex. Researchers have been studying it for decades and have not found one single cause of autism. The scientific community agrees that a mix of environmental and genetic factors likely play a role.
- ▶ We know that [autism is more likely to occur when a person has:](#)
 - older parents or a sibling who is autistic
 - a genetic or chromosomal condition like Down syndrome or Fragile X syndrome
 - a very low birth weight
- ▶ We also know that autism happens more often when [a mother becomes pregnant after the age of 35](#), has [gestational diabetes](#), or [gives birth early](#).

WHY IS AUTISM PREVALENCE INCREASING?

- ▶ There has been a lot of information in the news about how autism prevalence (the number of people in a population that have autism relative to all the people in a population) has been increasing in recent years.



- ▶ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network \(ADDM\)](#) estimates that about 1 in 31 (3.2%) children aged 8 years have autism.
- ▶ There are many reasons for the increase in autism prevalence now compared to previous years and much of the increase is likely due to better awareness of autism. Here are a few main reasons:
 - Diagnostic criteria for autism were broadened in 1994 and 2013.
 - We have better autism screening tools.
 - Providers are better at recognizing autism.

WHAT IS LEUCOVORIN (FOLINIC ACID)?

- ▶ [Leucovorin](#) is a prescription medication form of vitamin B9 and has been primarily used in cancer treatment to protect healthy cells from the toxic side effects of chemotherapy.
- ▶ On September 22, 2025, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced that leucovorin will be approved as a treatment for autism.
- ▶ Autism researchers, scientists, and professional organizations have stated that there is not enough evidence that leucovorin is an effective treatment:
 - [Coalition of Autism Scientists](#)
 - [Autism Science Foundation \(ASF\)](#)
 - [Autism Society of America \(ASA\)](#)
 - [Autism Speaks](#)
 - [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#)
 - [American Psychiatric Association \(APA\)](#)
 - [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)
- ▶ Self-advocate organizations have also made public statements on this medication:
 - [Autistic Self Advocacy Network \(ASAN\)](#)
 - More studies are necessary about this medication before a determination can be made about its use for treatment.

RESOURCES

- ▶ [Research Red Flags](#)
- ▶ [OAR Tips for Understanding Diagnoses and Recommendations](#)