



Sensible Action For Ending Mercury-Induced  
Neurological Disorders

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## **Familial Susceptibility to Mercury Is a Risk Factor for Autism.** *New research shows six-fold risk of ASD in grandchildren of acrodynia survivors*

*SafeMinds calls on the pharmaceutical industry to remove mercury from all products, including vaccines.*

Atlanta, GA. Researchers from Australia have identified an ancestry of Pink Disease (Infantile Acrodynia) as a risk factor for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Pink disease was common in the first half of the 20th century as a mysterious illness affecting children between the ages of eighteen months and three and a half years. The disorder presented with apathy, irritability, and progressive loss of speech, symptoms very similar to those exhibited by children with autism. Nearly fifty years passed before a connection was made between the disease and exposure to mercury in teething powder, worm medications and diaper rinses. The disease developed in approximately 1 in 500 children exposed to the products and experts identified idiosyncratic sensitivity to mercury as the key risk factor.

The new study, published July 28<sup>th</sup> in the Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health available at <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15287394.2011.590097?journalCode=uteh20>, investigated the hypothesis that autism can result from the interaction between mercury exposure and a genetic predisposition to sensitivity to mercury. Currently, 43 peer-reviewed studies support a link between mercury and autism, and experts agree that autism is caused by the interaction of genetic susceptibility and environmental exposures.

The Australian researchers, David Austin, PhD and Kerrie Shandley investigated whether individuals with a known hypersensitivity to mercury were more likely to have descendants with an autism spectrum disorder. They surveyed 522 adult survivors of Pink Disease about the health of their grandchildren. They found that 1 in 25 of these grandchildren had an autism spectrum disorder compared to 1 in 160 children of the same ages in the general population in Australia; a staggering six-fold increase in relative risk. Dr. Austin had the following comment, "The large elevation in autism prevalence in this group of children was startling especially given that rates of other childhood disorders were at expected levels. The thing that differentiates these children from the general population, to which they were compared, is a family history of mercury sensitivity. We were simply blown away by the results."

SafeMinds Board member Lyn Redwood RN, MSN whose son was diagnosed with mercury toxicity and autism calls on the pharmaceutical industry to once and for all remove mercury from their products, “The FDA has identified over 130 medical products that contain mercury <http://www.safeminds.org/news/documents/Mercury%20in%20Drug%20and%20Biologic%20Products.pdf> and 7 vaccines that contain mercury <http://www.vaccinesafety.edu/thi-table.htm> .

The continued use of these products in to the 21<sup>st</sup> century when safer and more effective alternatives exist is unacceptable and dangerous.”

For more information on the symptoms of Pink Disease and the overlap with autism please visit <http://www.safeminds.org/news/documents/Acrodynia%20comparison%20combined.pdf> or contact [Lyn@safeminds.org](mailto:Lyn@safeminds.org).

*Safe Minds, [www.safeminds.org](http://www.safeminds.org)*



**Child with Acrodynia, form  
of mercury poisoning**  
(courtesy: *L'Acrodynie* by AW Cameron, 1931)



**Child diagnosed with autism**  
(courtesy: Lyn Redwood, Safe Minds, 2001)