MYTHS VS FACTS

Exploring 10 common myths about autism and genetic testing

1

MYTH: **Autism is unrelated to genetics.**

FACT: Autism is strongly influenced by genetics, but there is no single "autism gene." A specific genetic change may help explain the diagnosis in about 1 in 3 autistic people, particularly those with other medical or developmental conditions.

2

MYTH: **Autism is caused by parenting style or personal choices.**

FACT: Autism is not caused by parenting style or personal choices. It is a neurodevelopmental condition that arises from biological processes beginning early in development. Blame is not supported by scientific evidence and can increase stigma.

3

MYTH: **If autism is genetic, it must have been inherited from a parent.**

FACT: Some genetic changes associated with autism are inherited, while others occur spontaneously, called "de *novo*", and are not present in either parent's tested DNA. Identifying a genetic change does not automatically mean it was inherited from a parent.

4

MYTH: **Genetic testing can diagnose autism.**

FACT: Genetic testing cannot diagnose autism. Autism is diagnosed through developmental history, observation, and clinical assessments. Testing may identify an underlying genetic condition associated with autism, but it cannot confirm or rule out autism by itself.

5

MYTH: **Genetic testing is about trying to "cure" autism.**

FACT: Genetic testing is not about curing autism. Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition, not a disease to eliminate. Testing aims to better understand an individual's biology, identify associated medical conditions, and support care, planning, and decision making.

6

MYTH: **Genetic testing will not affect ASD care.**

FACT: Genetic information can help explain autism in some individuals, guide medical care, identify health risks and additional needs, inform family planning, and connect people with support groups. Genetic research also advances our understanding of neurodevelopment and helps improve supports and interventions.

7

MYTH: **All autistic people have an identifiable genetic change.**

FACT: Not all autistic people have an identifiable genetic change. Although genetics plays an important role in autism, testing cannot identify a specific genetic explanation for everyone. Both genetic and non-genetic factors may contribute to an individual's autism diagnosis.

8

MYTH: **Genetic testing is only useful for young children.**

FACT: Genetic testing can provide valuable information at any age. Results may guide medical care, identify health concerns that need monitoring, and connect people with specialized support and resources. They may also help professionals better understand a person's needs.

9

MYTH: **Genetic testing requires a blood draw**

FACT: Genetic testing may use blood or saliva to look for changes in chromosomes or genes. Genetic counseling helps individuals and families understand the results, their implications, and limitations.

10

MYTH: **If someone has already had genetic testing after an autism diagnosis, there is no reason to test again**

FACT: Genetic testing and knowledge continue to improve. People with previous negative or inconclusive results may benefit from discussing reanalysis of existing data or newer tests with a healthcare professional.

Curious to learn more?

Explore our **"Myth or Fact?"** series on PRISMA's social media channels (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn) to learn more about common myths surrounding autism and genetics. Have a myth you'd like us to explore? Send it to prisma@ualberta.ca