



Parents Credit Chelation With Autism Cure

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Transcript from video broadcast.

A treatment for lead poisoning that's been around for decades is now being used to treat autistic children.

Some parents say chelation is bringing about dramatic change, but it is also bringing about controversy.

Josh Shoemaker, almost 4, is not his old self, his parents are happy to say.

Angie Shoemaker, Josh's mom, said, "It's just not even comparable. He's just not the same child."

Josh was diagnosed with autism a year ago. His parents say Josh barely spoke, rarely responded and had slid into his own world, as was captured in home video from June. His father, Scott, said, "He used to spin himself in circles constantly, we were losing him daily."

But within five months, Josh was talking and responsive. The Shoemakers credit a treatment called chelation, outlined in a recent edition of *Mothering Magazine*. Josh's parents spread a sulfur-based cream on his skin, a compound that they and doctors who prescribe it say roots out toxins like mercury from the body, which they blame for Josh's autism.

Dr. Phil De Meio believes in chelation therapy for autism.

"The sulfur grabs onto the mercury like a magnet, so our body can excrete it. Where it would never have the ability to do that on its own without something like this," De Meio said. There is far from consensus about what causes autism, NBC11's Brooke Hart reported. Most doctors see no place for chelation as therapy for autism.

Two years ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention commissioned a report that found no evidence of a link between mercury and autism.

Mercury's other effects on children are a concern, however.

The Food and Drug Administration warns pregnant women to avoid certain fish and has had a mercury ingredient removed from most vaccines.

But can chelation, a treatment big insurers cover for mercury poisoning, help against autism? One pediatrician cautioned that Josh's progress, though dramatic, is not proof.

"Why is he improved? I don't know. Would he (have) improved on his own? I don't know. But as of now, mercury is not a cause of autism based on the studies we know now the chelation is not an acceptable form of treatment for autism."

Josh's parents and speech therapist say his improvement is proof to them that it works. "Josh is the only child I've ever worked with that I can say he's going to go to kindergarten being a perfectly normal kindergartner, and he was not a perfectly normal 2-year-old and it's chelation that did it," speech therapist Nancy McCloskey said.

His mother, Angie, agrees. "It is like he went from his world into ours."

His parents are convinced that they found the solution for him.

Chelation is FDA approved only to treat lead poisoning.

Federal researchers are looking into whether it can help heart patients by draining calcium from clogged arteries.

Brooke Hart, NBC News, reporting.