

## Mason's Story

*My son was born an apparently healthy, full term, bright eyed baby boy. He hit his major milestones on time. Many parents report that their child had a sudden regression, often following immunizations, infection or some other immune system assault, but I've always said that Mason had a 1-2-3 punch into a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). At 12 months, exactly 9 days following his MMR, varicella, etc combination of vaccinations, he had a fever and high pitched screaming, such that his aunt remarked he should go to the doctor because she had never seen him act like that. I called our pediatrician's office only to be told that I couldn't be seen until 3 a.m. the following morning. Looking back I realize that at that time he quit answering "yes" to questions, a word that he wouldn't say again until he was 4 years old. As time went on, he still seemed somewhat advanced as he mastered most preschool work (colors, shapes, letters, counting) by his second birthday. He could sing ~40 children's songs and at 27 months could spell and write his name. He really loved learning! Around 28 months my husband and I took him on a vacation to Florida. He really enjoyed the sandy playgrounds at Cypress Gardens and on the beach near Tampa, as well as the children's area at Sea World.*

*After a short period of time after we returned home, he became very cranky and started refusing to walk. After a period of days he ran a fever, so we took him into the pediatrician's office on the Saturday before Easter. The pediatrician found an extremely large lymph node in his groin, with a red rashy area and indentation. His diagnosis was "cat scratch fever." He gave us a prescription for a 5 day course of Zithromax which produced sweating like you would have never believed from such a young child. Afterwards, the love of learning that he had displayed was gone. I took him to the park for a playdate with another child from gymnastics and he seemed fearful of the other child and also fearful of the slides, whereas just a few short weeks before he had had a great time on the slides in Florida! When I expressed my concerns to the pediatrician, he told me that he didn't think that it was anything "too exotic".*

*When I expressed concerns about autism, he told me that my son was "too bright" to have that because "most of those kids are retarded". It wasn't until my son was put to sleep to set a broken bone 1 year later that he started displaying such neurological symptoms as rapid eye blinking, stuttering, eye rolling and hand watching. When I returned to the pediatrician's office, he could no longer deny that anything was wrong. I left his office never to return again. I thought if it took him so long to diagnose it (I actually did most of the work!) then there was no way that he could possibly know what to do about it!*

*As time went on, we entered a dizzying merry go round of therapies and doctors visits. Our area is particularly poor in terms of educational therapies and medical treatments, so my husband and I would travel long distances to see physicians and I would attend conferences out of state to learn about therapies. I would*

*often bring up the subject of Lyme but none of the doctors we saw ever followed up on it. At the time I was working for a company that provided home health care and several of the patients were receiving antibiotics from a regional Lyme specialist in my area. I eventually made an appointment with him and he tested my son for Lyme and his tests were positive, five years after the fact! He told me that the diagnosis of "cat scratch fever", had he actually had it, was a red flag for Lyme. My son likely didn't even have cat scratch fever at all, as he didn't have any antibodies to that particular organism. We didn't even have a cat!*

*Realizing that our Lyme specialist didn't understand the fragile metabolism of a child with ASD, I continued with the DAN! approach of treating nutritional deficiencies, toxicity, and immune system abnormalities. I was able to test him myself for genetic markers for celiac disease. Because my son was positive for this gene, which is a serious intolerance to gluten, he maintains a strict gluten free diet, something that my pediatrician had referred to as a crazy path! My son has made progress, but is nowhere like he "should have been" or where he would likely be if he had been diagnosed and treated in a more timely fashion.*