

## **Jenny McCarthy**

As more and more families are choosing not to vaccinate their children, more and more children are contracting deadly diseases that are easily prevented by vaccines. The two trends are unmistakable and the positive correlation between the two is undeniable. Opponents of vaccines (anti-vaxxers) use false science (pseudo-science) for their rationale that vaccines are dangerous in order to create hysteria among well-intentioned but ill-informed parents while proponents of vaccines use solid, science-based rationale as the basis for their belief that vaccines are the single-most important discovery of modern medicine. Anti-vaxxers are leading many parents down a very dangerous road. Two of the most conspicuous "pied pipers" of the anti-vaccine movement are Jenny McCarthy and Andrew Wakefield. Jenny McCarthy is the single most recognizable public face of the anti-vaccination movement.

On the surface, Jenny McCarthy is simply a concerned mom whose child has (had?) autism and who firmly believes that the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine was the cause of her son's disorder. In fact, she believes so strongly in her conviction that vaccines cause autism that she has dedicated her life to exposing the pro-vaccine, scientific world for what she thinks it is--a group of mad men who have nothing better to do with their lives than to sit around concocting ways to increase the incidence of autism because they are too lazy to actually work and create safe vaccines--vaccines that have (oh by the way) saved countless millions of lives.

Jenny McCarthy dropped out of nursing school at the age of nineteen. Two years later, at the age of 21, she began her career as a nude model by posing for Playboy magazine. That year, she was named October's Playmate of the Month. In 1994, she was named Playmate of the Year. She has appeared in Playboy seven times and has been their cover model six times. Her latest appearance was in 2012 at the age of 39. She has also acted, landed some television host roles, and written successful books on pregnancy and motherhood. Nothing she has done in her past, however, qualifies her as an authority on vaccines. Yet, today, Jenny McCarthy is best known for her role as an activist spokesperson for the anti-vaccine movement.

Jenny McCarthy has one son named Evan. At the age of three, Evan was diagnosed with autism, a diagnosis whose accuracy has been questioned by the medical community. Two years later, McCarthy began working as an activist on behalf of autism-related organizations. She firmly believes that Evan's autism was caused by the MMR vaccine and actively preaches about the dangers of this and other vaccines. Opponents of the anti-vaccine movement believe that McCarthy's claims are unfounded and that they have been a major impediment to efforts to protect children from numerous life-threatening illnesses that could easily be prevented by vaccination. The controversy rages on and is a major source of disagreement and stress between doctors and parents.

Jenny McCarthy and other anti-vaxxers have no scientific evidence for their claims that vaccines cause autism. McCarthy has no medical degree and has done no scientific research to back up her claims. When reading interviews in which she is questioned about her claims, it is conspicuously obvious that McCarthy's knowledge of science and scientific research is seriously flawed. Yet, she has a major following of parents who firmly believe, as she does, that vaccines are dangerous and should not be given. Why? Beats me. I guess that the opinion of a pretty face and a nice body have more influence on some parent's decisions to protect their children from deadly diseases than the opinions of multiple scientists do. Go figure. Please vaccinate your children; their health and the health of those around them depend on it.