

Officials: Vaccines may have injured girl

By Marilyn Marchione
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Government health officials have conceded that childhood vaccines worsened a rare, underlying disorder that ultimately led to autism-like symptoms in a Georgia girl, and that she should be paid from a federal vaccine-injury fund.

Medical and legal experts say the narrow wording and circumstances probably make the case an exception — not a precedent for thousands of other pending claims.

However, parents of and advocates for autistic children see the case as a victory. Although the science on this is very limited, the girl's disorder may be more common in autistic children than in healthy ones.

A lawyer for the girl, who is 9, has scheduled a news conference in Atlanta today.

The girl has a disorder involving her mitochondria that impairs cells' ability to use nutrients, and often causes problems in brain function. It can lead to delays in walking and talking.

According to a copy of the concession by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, five vaccines the girl received on one day in 2000 aggravated her condition, predisposing her to metabolic problems that manifested as worsening brain function "with features of autism spectrum disorder."