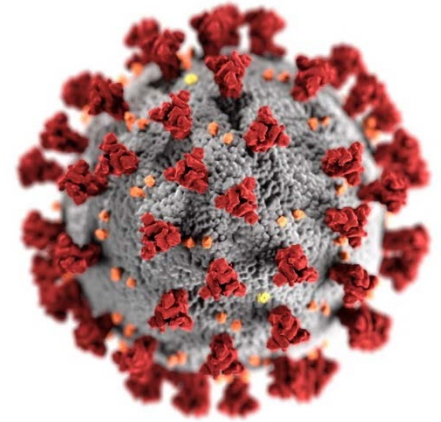# Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines Among Your Patients: Tips for the Healthcare Team

Developed by:

CDC COVID-19 Response

Vaccine Task Force

June 2021

Vaccinate with **Confidence**

Presentation Overview

- Elements of vaccine confidence
- Strategies for building vaccine confidence
- Strategies for talking with patients about COVID-19 vaccine
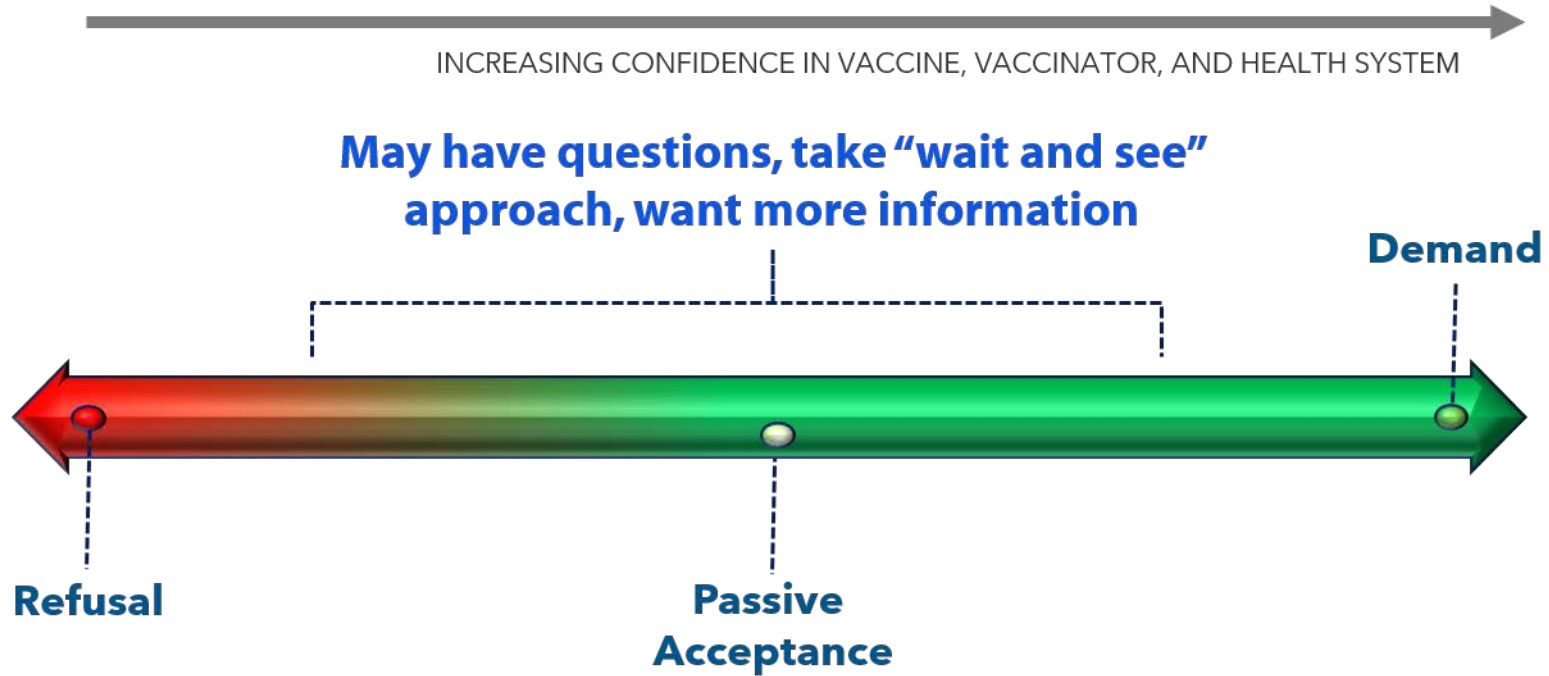- Communication resources

Elements of Vaccine Confidence

Defining Vaccine Confidence

- *Vaccine confidence* is the trust that patients, parents, or healthcare professionals have in:

  - recommended **vaccines**;

  - **professionals** who administer vaccines; and

  - **processes and policies** that lead to vaccine development, licensure, manufacturing, and recommendations for use.

Willingness to Accept a Vaccine Falls on a Continuum

INCREASING CONFIDENCE IN VACCINE, VACCINATOR, AND HEALTH SYSTEM

May have questions, take "wait and see" approach, want more information

Demand

Refusal

Passive Acceptance

Strategies for Building Vaccine Confidence

Vaccinate with **Confidence**

A National Strategy to Reinforce Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines

Build Trust

Objective: Share clear, complete, and accurate messages about COVID-19 vaccines and take visible actions to build trust in the vaccine, the vaccinator, and the system in coordination with federal, state, and local agencies and partners.

Empower Healthcare Personnel

Objective: Promote confidence among healthcare personnel* in their decision to get vaccinated and to recommend vaccination to their patients.

Engage Communities & Individuals

Objective: Engage communities in a sustainable, equitable and inclusive way — using two-way communication to listen, build trust, and increase collaboration.

*Personnel = All staff working in healthcare settings, including physicians, physician assistants/nurse practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists, support staff, and community health workers

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/vaccinate-with-confidence.html

![Vaccinate with **Confidence**]

A component of the National Strategy to Reinforce Confidence in COVID-19 vaccines

Empower Healthcare Personnel

Objective: Promote confidence among healthcare personnel in their decision to get vaccinated and to recommend vaccination to their patients.

Tactics

- ✓ Engage local and national professional associations, health systems, and healthcare personnel
- ✓ Ensure healthcare systems and medical practices are equipped to create a culture that builds confidence in COVID-19 vaccination.
- ✓ Strengthen the capacity of healthcare professionals to have empathetic vaccine conversations using motivational interviewing techniques.

Keys to Building Demand for Vaccines

Make vaccines:

- **Accessible** (easy to get)
- **Beneficial** (health benefits outweigh perceived or real risk of getting COVID-19 or perceived or real side effects from vaccination)
- **Convenient** (reduce out of pocket, social, and opportunity costs)
- **Desirable** (appealing)
- **Normative** (presented as a social default)
- **Necessary** (indispensable for accessing things they want to get back to doing)

Strategies to Build COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Among Healthcare Professionals

- **Host discussions** where personnel at different levels can ask questions and share concerns in a safe space.

- **Share key messages** with staff through emails, breakroom posters, and other channels.

- **Highlight the experiences** of employees who were initially hesitant to get vaccinated, but who later made the decision to get the vaccine.

- **Encourage senior leaders** to be vaccine champions.

Talking with Patients about COVID-19 Vaccination

The Role of Healthcare Professionals

- Healthcare professionals are patients' and parents' most trusted source of information on vaccines.

- Your answers to their questions matter and will help them make an informed decision about getting a COVID-19 vaccination for themselves or their children.

- Your strong vaccine recommendation is the most important part of the conversation.

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/engaging-patients.html

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Lead with Listening

- Do not make assumptions about whether your patients will choose to get vaccinated or the reasons for their decisions.
  - Instead, begin with an open-ended question, such as "What are your thoughts on getting a COVID-19 vaccination today?"
- Actively listen and seek to understand the patient's point of view.

- Recognize that these conversations can take time and may continue over the course of multiple encounters.

Use Patient-Centered Communication Techniques

- **Use open-ended questions** to promote dialogue. Ask about readiness to vaccinate and what questions or concerns they may have.

- **Paraphrase** any information shared to show that you have heard and understood it.

- **Praise measures already taken** to protect themselves or their children from COVID-19, like mask wearing and physical distancing. Then **frame** vaccination as a safe and effective way to help protect them and their loved ones from getting COVID-19.

- **Ask for permission** to share more information on COVID-19 vaccines. This will foster openness and connection.

Respond to Questions and Concerns with Empathy

- **Respond to questions** and concerns in a non-judgmental, respectful, and empathic way.

- **Provide accurate answers** using clear, simple language. Explore questions patients ask most often about vaccines (see URLs below).

- Some concerns may stem from mistrust in the medical establishment or the government as result of collective or individual mistreatment and traumas. **Acknowledging past traumas** may promote patients' trust in you and your message.

- **Acknowledge uncertainty** about what we don't yet know about COVID-19 vaccines. This can help build trust.

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/hcp/answering-questions.html
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

Give Your Strong Recommendation

- **Let your patients know** that you recommend COVID-19 vaccination for them. Your strong recommendation is critical for vaccine acceptance.

- **Tailor your recommendation** to include any relevant reasons why COVID-19 vaccination might be important for this particular patient.

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Give Your Strong Recommendation (cont'd)

- **Talk about your personal decision** and experience in getting a COVID-19 vaccine and your experience treating COVID-19 patients.
- **Share the benefits** of getting vaccinated, including:
  - Protecting themselves and others who may be more vulnerable, and
  - Enabling them to get back to activities they have missed.
    - Explain what they can do when they've been fully vaccinated.

Examples

- "I strongly recommend you get a COVID-19 vaccine…"
- "…This shot is especially important for you because of your [job/underlying health condition/vulnerable family member]."
- "…I believe in this vaccine so strongly that I got vaccinated as soon as it was available to me, and I recommended that everyone in my family do the same."
- "I have seen what COVID-19 can do to patients and their families. I want to protect you as best I can from COVID-19 infection and complications."

Key Messages About COVID-19 Vaccination

1. You can help **stop the COVID-19 pandemic** by getting a COVID-19 vaccine.
2. COVID-19 vaccines are **safe *and* effective**.
3. COVID-19 vaccines are **free**.
4. After COVID-19 vaccination, you might have some **temporary side effects.** These are normal signs that your body is building protection.
5. Once you are fully vaccinated, you can resume most activities that you stopped doing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as gathering indoors with family and friends, without wearing a mask.

Address Misinformation About COVID-19 Vaccination by Sharing Key Facts

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html

COVID-19 vaccines cannot give you COVID-19.

People who have already gotten sick with COVID-19 may still benefit from getting vaccinated.

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy or fertility.

COVID-19 vaccines do not change your DNA in any way.

Help Individuals Find Their Motivation for Getting Vaccinated

- Steer the conversation away from "why not?" and toward the important reasons that matter to them—**their "why."**
- The reasons that someone may choose to get vaccinated will always be those that are **most compelling to them personally**.
- You may choose to share your reasons for getting vaccinated or discuss common goals you may have, like visiting with family safely.

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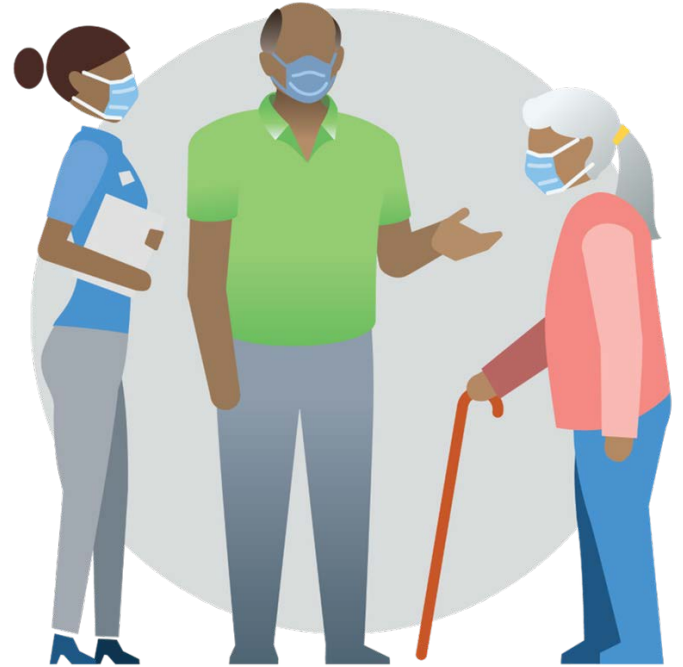
Wrap Up the Conversation

- **Encourage patients** or parents to take at least one action, such as:
  - Scheduling a vaccination appointment with your office, a pharmacy, or another vaccination site, or
  - Reading any handouts that you provide to them.

- If they decline vaccination, acknowledge that this is their decision, and keep the door open to revisiting the topic during future visits.

It Will Take More Than One Conversation to Change Minds

- Vaccine hesitancy, especially when rooted in **lack of trust** rather than lack of information, is best addressed through **trusted messengers** in trusted spaces.

- Encourage two-way dialogue and allow space for people to ask questions.

Resources

Sample Email or Letter on COVID-19 Vaccination To Send to Your Patients

Dear [INSERT PATIENT NAME],

I hope this [email/letter] finds you and your loved ones staying safe and healthy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous disruption in each of our lives. As your primary care provider, I care deeply about your health and well-being. That's why I encourage you to get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible if you haven't already. Getting vaccinated can bring you one step closer to enjoying the activities you miss. It is one of the most important things you can do to help protect yourself and your loved ones from this disease. Everyone 12 years of age and older is now eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccination.

Do you have questions or concerns about vaccination? I want to answer them as best I can and help you make an informed decision. You can call my office at (###) ###-####.

Here are some of my answers to questions I've heard most often from patients:

- **Why should I get vaccinated?** COVID-19 can cause serious illness or even death. There's no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to family, friends, and others around you. COVID-19 vaccination is an important tool to help us stop the pandemic and get back to normal.
- **Are COVID-19 vaccines effective at preventing the disease?** All COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States are effective at preventing the disease. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will also help keep you from getting seriously ill even if you do get COVID-19.
- **Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?** COVID-19 vaccines are safe. Over 100 million people in the United States are fully vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, and scientists are continuing to monitor their safety.
- **Will the shot make me sick? Will I have side effects?** You may have side effects after vaccination, but these are normal signs that your body is building protection. The most common side effects are pain, redness, and swelling in the arm where you got the shot, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, and nausea. If you have these side effects, they should go away within a few days. Serious safety problems are rare. But if you are concerned about them, I'd be happy to talk to you.

There are many places where you can get vaccinated, and it's 100% free. You can

- Contact our office to schedule a vaccination appointment. [PROVIDER: Remove this bullet if you do not offer vaccination and consider indicating that in the letter.]
- Visit vaccines.gov or www.vacunas.gov to find vaccines near you.
- Text your zip code to 438829 (GETVAX) or 822862 (VACUNA), or call 1-800-232-0233 to find vaccine locations.
- Call your local pharmacy or visit your local health department website.

I'm here to answer your questions, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME & CONTACT INFORMATION]

https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/downloads/Sample-Physician-Letter-COVID-19-Vaccine.docx

Resources for Talking with Patients about COVID-19 Vaccination

- COVID-19 data and vaccination tracker: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home

- Vaccines for COVID-19 – information for patients: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html

- Where to find a COVID-19 vaccine: https://www.vaccines.gov/

- Preparing to provide COVID-19 vaccines: https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/training.html

- Talking with patients about COVID-19 vaccines: www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/covid-conversations

- Frequently asked questions about COVID-19 vaccination: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

- COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/vaccines/toolkits/COVID-19-Vaccine-for-Preteens_Teens-508.pdf

- Clinician Outreach and Communication (COCA) Call – What every clinician should know about COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness and how to address patient questions and concerns: https://emergency.cdc.gov/coca/calls/2021/callinfo_030921.asp

# COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit for Medical Centers, Clinics, and Clinicians

- Stickers
- Social media
- Slides
- Fact sheets & FAQs
- Posters

www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-systems-communication-toolkit.html
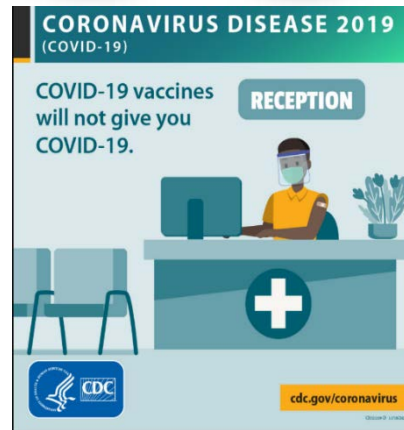
Vaccine Safety Monitoring Systems

- **Existing** systems and data sources are used to monitor safety of vaccines post-authorization and post-licensure, such as:

  - Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS)

  - Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD)

  - Clinical Immunization Safety Assessment (CISA)

  - Biologics Effectiveness and Safety System (BEST)

- **New** systems have been developed to monitor COVID-19 vaccine safety, such as **v-safe**:

  - Active surveillance that uses text messaging to initiate web-based survey monitoring.

  - Provides telephone follow up to anyone who reports medically significant adverse events.
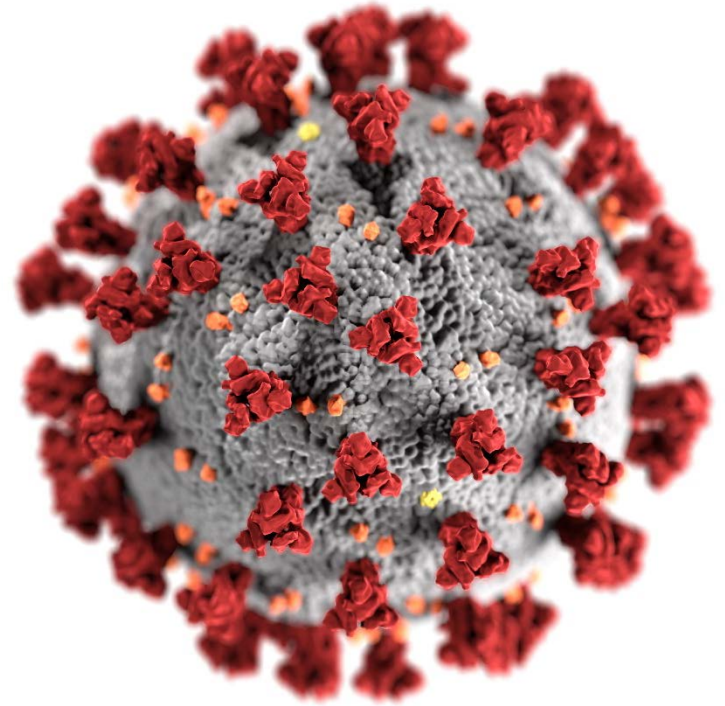
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)
TTY: 1-888-232-6348   www.cdc.gov