

## **Key Messages for Healthcare Professionals**

Use key messages to encourage healthcare professionals to ensure their patients are up to date on vaccines. These messages can be used as written or adapted to fit your particular audience of healthcare professionals.



### **You have the power to protect against vaccine-preventable diseases.**

#### Maternal Vaccination

- You have the power to ensure your patients and their babies are protected from serious diseases like pertussis and seasonal flu.
- Your recommendations make a difference to your patients. You are their most trusted source of health information during their pregnancies.
- State clearly that you would like her to get vaccinated. For example, you can say: “I recommend Tdap and flu vaccines for you and all of my pregnant patients, because I believe vaccines are the best way to help protect you and your baby against whooping cough and the flu.”
- Be a champion for vaccination in your practice. Ensure everyone in your practice is sharing a consistent message with patients about the importance of vaccines during pregnancy.

#### Childhood/Adolescent Vaccination

- You have the power to ensure your patients are protected from serious diseases like measles, cancers caused by HPV, and seasonal flu.
- Your recommendation is the number one reason that parents choose to vaccinate their child on time.
- When recommending vaccines, use a presumptive approach that assumes parents will choose to vaccinate their child. For example, try saying: “Your child is due for these vaccines today,” instead of “What do you want to do about vaccines today?”
- When recommending the HPV vaccine, it’s important to recommend the vaccine the *same way* and *same day* that you recommend other vaccines for adolescents.
- Be a champion for vaccination in your practice. Ensure everyone in your practice is sharing a consistent message with parents about the importance of vaccines for their child.

#### Adult Vaccination

- You have the power to protect your patients against serious diseases like shingles, pneumococcal disease, hepatitis B, and seasonal flu.
- Your recommendation can make a difference. Healthcare professionals are the most valued and trusted source of health information for adults.
- All healthcare professionals have a role to play in ensuring adults are getting recommended vaccines.
- Even if your practice doesn’t administer vaccines or stock certain vaccines, you can make strong recommendations, refer patients to other vaccine providers, and follow up to ensure vaccination.
- Be a champion for vaccination in your practice. Ensure everyone in your practice is sharing a consistent message with patients about the importance of vaccines for their health.

## **Vaccines are safe and effective at preventing serious diseases.**

### Maternal Vaccination

- For many patients, a strong, clear recommendation will be sufficient to accept recommended vaccines. Others may need more information. Use the [SHARE approach](#) to communicate important information to help patients make informed decisions about vaccinations.
- Many patients who have questions are looking for reassurance from you that vaccines are safe and effective for pregnancy. For patients who have concerns about if these vaccines are safe to receive during pregnancy, use plain language to address their concerns.
  - “Whooping cough vaccine has been carefully studied by medical and scientific experts. Getting the vaccine during pregnancy does not put you or your baby at increased risk for pregnancy complications like low birth weight or preterm delivery.”
  - “The flu shot has been given to millions of pregnant women over many years.”
- For patients who are concerned about taking certain medical products while pregnant, it may be helpful to explain that vaccines reduce your risk of infection by working with your body’s natural defenses to help you safely develop immunity to disease.
- If patients decline vaccines, keep the door open and revisit vaccines at the next prenatal appointment.

### Childhood/Adolescent Vaccination

- While most parents will accept vaccines for their child when you make an effective recommendation, some parents may have questions and concerns.
- Many parents who have questions are looking for reassurance from you that vaccines are safe and effective for their child. Taking the time to listen and understand parents’ concerns can help you save time and build trust.
- It may be helpful to educate parents about the safety systems that the U.S. has in place to monitor vaccines before and after they are licensed. See [resources](#) to share with parents to help reinforce the information you provide about the safety of recommended vaccines.
- If parents decline vaccines, keep the door open and revisit vaccines at the next appointment.

### Adult Vaccination

- For many patients, a strong, clear recommendation will be sufficient to accept recommended vaccines. Others may need more information. Use the [SHARE approach](#) to communicate important information to help patients make informed decisions about vaccinations.
- Many patients who have questions are looking for reassurance from you that vaccines are safe and effective. Know the benefits and side effects of all vaccines your practice administers, so you’re prepared to talk with your patients before recommending and administering the vaccine.
- If patients decline vaccines, keep the door open and revisit vaccines at the next appointment.

## **Vaccinate on time. Getting vaccines at the recommended time is the best way to protect against serious diseases.**

### Maternal Vaccination

- By ensuring your pregnant patients are up to date on recommended vaccines, you can help protect them and their babies from pertussis and flu.
- Changes in the immune, heart, and lung functions during pregnancy make a pregnant woman more likely to get seriously ill from the flu.

- Flu seasons vary in their timing from season to season, but CDC recommends pregnant women get vaccinated by the end of October. This timing helps protect your pregnant patients before flu activity begins to increase.
- To maximize the passive antibody transfer to the infant, you should administer Tdap during the early part of gestational weeks 27 through 36. The level of pertussis antibodies decreases over time, so you should administer Tdap during every pregnancy in order to transfer the greatest number of protective antibodies to each infant.
- Use every opportunity to vaccinate. Every visit is an opportunity to assess vaccination status.
- Include vaccination as a part of patients' pregnancy care. For example, try saying:
  - "When you come back for your next visit, it'll be time for your Glucose Challenge Screening Test and your whooping cough vaccine."
  - "Flu season is just starting and that means it's time for your flu vaccine. I'll have the nurse bring it in."

#### Childhood/Adolescent Vaccination

- The immunization schedule is carefully designed to provide protection early, before children are exposed to potentially serious diseases. By ensuring your patients vaccinate according to the recommended schedule, you'll be protecting them from 16 serious diseases.
- By assessing vaccination status at every visit, you can ensure your patients are up to date on all recommended vaccines.
- Share CDC's [parent-friendly immunization schedule](#) so parents know what to expect at each visit.
- For parents who want to delay or space out vaccines, you can explain that following the recommended schedule is the best way to protect against serious diseases and delaying vaccines could leave their child vulnerable to serious complications.

#### Adult Vaccination

- Vaccines are recommended for your adult patients based on their age, job, lifestyle, travel, or health conditions. By assessing vaccination status at every visit, you can ensure your adult patients are up to date on the vaccines recommended for them.
- Have the [current adult immunization schedule](#) readily available to share with patients and all staff in your practice.
- Patients with chronic health conditions should be up to date on their vaccinations, as they are at increased risk for complications from certain vaccine-preventable diseases.
  - For patients with diabetes, some vaccine-preventable diseases, like flu, can make glucose control more difficult.
  - For patients with heart disease, some vaccine-preventable diseases, like the flu, can increase the risk of another heart attack.
- If your patients do get sick, vaccination can also reduce the severity of the illness.

**Vaccine-preventable diseases are still a threat. Vaccination is the best protection.**

#### Maternal Vaccination

- Pregnant women and their babies are at greater risk for complications from flu and pertussis.
- Pertussis is still common in the United States. During the first few months of life, infants are at greatest risk of contracting pertussis and having severe, potentially life-threatening complications from the infection. Tdap vaccination during pregnancy helps protect infants until they can get their own vaccines.

- Pregnant women and their babies are at increased risk for influenza-related complications. Changes in the immune system, heart, and lungs during pregnancy make pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum) more prone to severe illness from flu, including illness resulting in hospitalization.

#### Childhood/Adolescent Vaccination

- While many serious diseases are no longer common in the United States thanks to vaccines, these diseases still exist and can spread when children aren't vaccinated.
- This year's measles outbreaks are a reminder of how quickly these diseases can spread when children aren't vaccinated.
- We also still see many cases of pertussis. Since 2010, between 15,000 and 50,000 cases of whooping cough have been reported each year in the United States.
- Every year, over 30,000 men and women are diagnosed with a cancer caused by HPV. HPV vaccination could prevent most of these cancers from ever developing.
- While relatively rare, some children die from flu each year.
  - Since 2004-2005, flu-related deaths in children reported to CDC during regular flu seasons have ranged from 37 deaths to 186 deaths each season.
  - Since 2004, about 8 in 10 children who die from flu-related complications are not vaccinated against the flu.
- Vaccinating patients according to the recommended immunization schedule is the best way to protect children and teens from serious diseases.

#### Adult Vaccination

- Every year, thousands of adults in the U.S. become seriously ill and are hospitalized because of diseases that vaccines can help prevent. Many adults even die from these diseases.
- Adult vaccination rates are low in the U.S. Most adults are not aware that they need vaccines.
- Adults with chronic conditions like diabetes or heart disease are at greater risk for severe complications from certain vaccine-preventable diseases.
- By ensuring your patients get recommended vaccines, you can help protect them from much of this unnecessary suffering. For example, every year, flu vaccines prevent countless illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths. During the 2017-2018 flu season, approximately 7 million illnesses, 109,000 hospitalizations, and 8,000 deaths were prevented by flu vaccines.

This document is found on the CDC website at: [CDC.gov/vaccines/NIAM](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/NIAM).