

Discussion Guide for Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines for Immigrants and Refugees

Conversations about the COVID-19 vaccines with your community members and clients may take many different forms and may happen in many different settings. Below you will find a proposed flow for those conversations.

Start the Conversation

Have you thought about whether or not you will get an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine?



Yes, I will get it.



I don't know.



I don't think I want to get it.

Sounds like you're not quite sure. Tell me more about what you've been hearing about the vaccine.

Conversation Tips:

- ✓ See the back page for common concerns and FAQs.
- ✓ If you've decided to get vaccinated, you can share how you made that decision with them.
- ✓ Acknowledge their feelings.
- ✓ You are a trusted source of information. Acknowledge where there is still uncertainty.
- ✓ Ask if they want family or other community members to be part of the decision-making process.

Can I ask you a question: What concerns are keeping you from getting the vaccine?

Conversation Tips:

- ✓ See the back page for common concerns and FAQs.
- ✓ If you had similar questions or concerns, share your decision-making process.
- ✓ Acknowledge their feelings and experiences.
- ✓ You are a trusted source of information. Acknowledge where there is uncertainty.

Follow-up

Thank them for sharing their concerns with you and ask again about willingness to get vaccinated.



I want to get vaccinated.

I'm glad we had this discussion and I appreciate that you shared your concerns with me today. Making an informed decision is important.

Encourage an Action Step:

- ✓ If possible, assist them in scheduling a vaccine appointment or give them information about an upcoming vaccine event.
- ✓ If they feel comfortable doing so, encourage them to share the information they learned to support their friends and community members in making the same decision.



I don't want to talk about it anymore.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me, I appreciate it. It's your right to say no. If you have any more thoughts after our conversation, I'm happy to talk to you more about it.

Conversation Tips:

- ✓ Provide opportunity to revisit discussion and offer additional resources from trusted sources.
- ✓ Provide a phone number to call or where to find you with any questions if they want to talk later.
- ✓ Offer to call them or reach them another way to continue the conversation later.

The best way to get up-to-date information about when and how to get vaccinated is by visiting the Washington State Department of Health website [CovidVaccineWA.org](https://www.covidvaccine.wa.gov) or by calling the Department of Health phone line **1-800-525-0127**, then press #. (For interpretive services, say your language when the call is answered.)

Common Concerns & Example Responses

They've experienced racism or faced another form of discrimination when receiving medical care.

"I'm sorry that happened to you. It was horrible and wrong. Your experience sounds frustrating and hurtful." After listening and further exploring their concerns, consider saying: "The vaccine will help prevent you from getting really sick from COVID-19. It is strongly recommended, but completely voluntary. I only want to make sure that you get the protection/care you need."

They mention harmful medical practices or experiments on Black and indigenous people in the past.

"You're absolutely right. The history of medical harm should not be ignored. Scientists have engaged in many harmful and racist practices in the name of medicine. The COVID-19 vaccine is being handled very differently. Can I tell you what I know about the vaccine and the vaccine trials? I want to make sure this feels like the right decision for you."

They shared that they believe there is no point in getting vaccinated if they can still get infected.

"I understand. Although there is still a chance of getting COVID-19 after vaccination, the vaccines were designed to prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 and are still successful at doing so. If you do get sick after you're up to date on your vaccinations, you will still have some benefit from the vaccine because you are more likely to only get a mild case instead of a serious case."

They share concerns about politics or the government's involvement.

"You are right, it has gotten political. Ultimately though, this is about your health and the health of your community. The vaccines are very effective at preventing people from getting sick."

Frequently Asked Questions & Example Responses

What are the side effects?

(If possible, share your experience with side effects.) "Like other vaccines, the most common side effects are a sore arm, tiredness, headache/muscle pain, and fever, all of which are usually mild and go away within a few days. Side effects can be annoying, but they are also a sign that the vaccine is working. The risks of getting COVID-19 are higher than the risk of vaccine side effects."

Are the vaccines safe? Were they tested on people like me?

"Yes, they are safe. The FDA authorized or granted full approval for these vaccines after reviewing a lot of evidence carefully. Independent experts confirmed that it met high safety standards. When the original vaccines were introduced, about 30% of the U.S. participants in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines trials were Black, Indigenous, or other people of color, and about half were older adults. For the Novavax vaccine, about 19% of participants for the vaccine trials were Black, Indigenous, or other people of color. There were no significant safety concerns identified in these or any other groups for any of the trials."

Is it safe to get my child vaccinated?

"Yes. Vaccinations are available to children over the age of 6 months. In ongoing clinical trials for vaccinating children no serious side effects have been detected. Children receive a lower dosage of the vaccine compared to adults. Getting your child vaccinated helps lower the risk of them getting infected with COVID-19, reduces their chance of getting seriously ill, and if they do become infected with COVID-19 it reduces their chances of needing hospitalization and lowers their risk of dying from COVID-19. For more information refer to the Vaccinating Youth link in the resources below."

Do COVID-19 mRNA vaccines change your DNA? What's in the vaccine?

"No. The vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. The vaccines contain the active ingredient, messenger RNA (mRNA), along with fat, salts, and sugars to help them work better in the body. The ingredients are all safe and needed for the vaccine to do its job. It does not contain human cells (including fetal cells), the virus that causes COVID-19, any animal by-products including pork products, latex, metals, tracking devices, or preservatives. It was not grown in eggs and contains no egg products."

Can the vaccines cause me to get COVID-19?

"No. The vaccines will also not give you COVID-19. The vaccines teach our body's cells how recognize and fight the coronavirus."

Resources

- » [Vaccine Central](#) (National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants and Migrants, University of Minnesota)
- » [COVID-19 Vaccine 101 Webinar: Guidance for those working with Refugee, Immigrant and Migrant communities](#) (National Resource Center for Refugees, Immigrants and Migrants, University of Minnesota)
- » [COVID-19 Vaccine Know Your Rights](#) (Washington Solidarity Immigrant Network)
- » [Health Care Provider Discussion Guide: Building Confidence in mRNA vaccines](#) (Washington State Department of Health (DOH))
- » [Vaccinating Youth](#) (DOH)
- » [COVID-19 Vaccine Equity and Engagement Community Resources](#) (DOH)
- » [Therapeutics Information for Health Care Providers](#) (DOH)
- » [Building Confidence and Busting Myths](#) (DOH)

They expressed concern that they don't want to be a research experiment.

"I understand your hesitation, but the people who developed the vaccines didn't skip any of the necessary safety measures. The vaccines were tested thoroughly before being offered to the public, and the science behind them has been studied for decades. There have been over 13 billion vaccine doses given safely worldwide."

They share concerns about misinformation and not knowing which sources to trust.

"There is a lot of information out there. Sometimes it is hard to tell which resources are factual and which are not. (Share resources that you trust, for example: "I go to health care providers, the state Department of Health, and the CDC for my information. I know that their information comes from scientists who study COVID-19." For additional resources, see below.)

They expressed concern about having to return to multiple COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

For most people 5 years and older you just need one 2023-2024 dose to be up to date with COVID-19 vaccination! This simplified recommendation provides better protection against new variants and makes it easier to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Those who are immunocompromised may receive an additional dose. If you are over 65 you should receive an additional dose. While I understand it's frustrating to have to come back, an additional dose will offer you the best protection against COVID-19."

How long does COVID-19 vaccination protection last and does it protect against infection of new variants?

"COVID-19 vaccine protection does appear to decrease over time, but vaccines are still preventing against serious illness, hospitalizations, and death from COVID-19. There are now updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines that were created to provide protection against the omicron variant. In order to continue protecting yourself and others, the CDC recommends that all who are eligible stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccination."

What should I do if I got vaccinated outside of the United States?

"You are considered up to date with COVID-19 vaccination when you have received 1 2023-2024 mRNA vaccine dose. If you received a 2023-2024 mRNA vaccine outside of the U.S. that is FDA-authorized or WHO approved, you do not need to receive a second 2023-2024 mRNA dose unless you are immunocompromised."

Do I have to show proof of citizenship to get the vaccine?

"No, you do not need to be a U.S. citizen to get the vaccine. That means you do not need a social security number, or other documents with your immigration status, to get the vaccine. Some vaccine providers might ask for a social security number, but you do not have to give one. Your child does not need to be a U.S. citizen to get the vaccine. Health care providers will not ask for anyone's immigration status. In most cases, parents and guardians will need to give consent to vaccinate youth under age 18. [The Bridge Access Program](#) temporarily provides updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines at no cost to adults aged 19 and older without health insurance, and adults whose insurance does not cover all COVID-19 costs, through December 2024. To find a participating pharmacy location in this program, visit www.Vaccines.gov.

Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or want to have a baby one day?

"COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended and considered safe for all who are eligible, including people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant. Pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccination has not been found to cause any problems with becoming pregnant. In fact, some studies show that a vaccinated parent may pass protective antibodies against COVID-19 along to their baby through pregnancy and their breast milk."

- » [COVID-19 Vaccine Transportation Resources](#) (DOH)

Adapted from:

1. Communication skills for the COVID vaccine. VitalTalk. vitaltalk.org/guides/communication-skills-for-the-covid-vaccine/. Published January 8, 2021.
2. Gagneur A. Motivational interviewing: A powerful tool to address vaccine hesitancy. *Can Commun Dis Rep.* 2020;46(4):93-97. Published 2020 Apr 2. doi:10.14745/ccdr.v46i04a06
3. Opel DJ, Lo B, Peek ME. Addressing Mistrust About COVID-19 Vaccines Among Patients of Color. *Ann Intern Med.* Published online February 9, 2021 at acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-0055. doi:10.7326/m21-0055