

Speaking With Patients About COVID-19 Vaccination



One of the strongest predictors of a patient's decision to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is the recommendation of their health care provider. No matter your specialty, every patient visit is an opportunity to recommend and discuss COVID-19 vaccination.

Part 1: Start the Conversation

Begin with a strong recommendation:

"I strongly recommend you get vaccinated to protect yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19."

You may also find it helpful to do any of the following:

- Emphasize the benefits of vaccination
- Tailor your recommendation to the individual patient you're speaking with
- Share your personal experience deciding to get vaccinated

Part 2: Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions promote dialogue, so that you can actively explore the questions and concerns of your patients who are unsure or undecided about their decision.

- How are you feeling about the vaccines?
- What have you heard about the vaccines?
- What questions do you have?
- What worries you most?
- What else would you like to know?
- How can I support you in making this decision?

If a patient decides that they would like to get vaccinated, address as many barriers to access as possible.

This may include someone from your team helping them to schedule an appointment, walking them to a vaccination pod, or finding the closest vaccination site to their home. Avoid simply directing them to a website or phone number.

Part 3: Continue to Engage With Those Who Choose Not to Vaccinate

- **Accept that some patients may choose not to get vaccinated at this time, or ever.** Some patients may need more time. It's important to talk about vaccination at every visit, and to ensure that they have ongoing access to accurate information and support.
- **Address misinformation respectfully.** When dispelling misconceptions, keep in mind that many of your patients may have received misinformation from sources they respect and trust, such as family members and friends.
- **Honor concerns rooted in medical racism and distrust.** Acknowledge the seriousness and impact of medical racism. Respect that your patients may have experienced unequal treatment first-hand.

If your patient is unsure or would like to wait:

- **Affirm** their openness to getting vaccinated and their commitment to doing what's right for their health.
- **Share** your concern that they are at risk of getting seriously sick with COVID-19 as long as they continue to wait.
- **Ask** what might help them to feel more confident in making the decision to get vaccinated.
- **Reiterate** your availability and support if they want to keep talking through this decision.

If your patient does not want to get vaccinated:

- **Do not pass judgment** on their decision.
- **Thank them** for being honest and sharing their thoughts with you.
- **Share** your concern that they are at risk for getting seriously sick with COVID-19.
- **Ask** if there is anything that might help them feel more confident in making the decision to get vaccinated.
- **Reiterate** your availability and support if they want to keep talking through this decision.