



How to Talk About COVID-19 Vaccines With Friends and Family

It's normal to have questions and concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines.

The amount of information — and [misconceptions](#) — about the virus and vaccines can be overwhelming.

There're good ways to address people's questions and concerns, especially if you're trying to get someone to get vaccinated who

- Doesn't want or feel the need to.
- Is afraid to.

Here're some tips to have a good conversation.

Listen and respond with empathy

- Listen without judgment.
 - Make sure you're feeling calm, open, and ready to listen.
 - Positive body language, like maintaining eye contact, can put your friends and family at ease. Try not to roll your eyes or cross your arms.
 - Treat the other person's thoughts and feelings with respect — even if they're different from your own or you disagree with them.
 - Don't interrupt. Let the other person finish talking before you talk.
- Make the other person feel heard.
 - For example, you can say: "It sounds like you are stressed at work and home, and I'm sorry to hear that concerns about the vaccine are causing you more stress. That's really tough."
- Don't tack on "but" to your words.
 - For example, even if you disagree with something the other person says, don't say something

like: “I hear what you’re saying, but I don’t agree.” Leave it at: “I hear what you’re saying.”

- Don’t directly challenge something the other person says that you think is wrong.
 - For example, don’t respond by saying: “No, that’s not true.” Instead, offer to share factual information about the vaccines from a trusted source so they can decide for themselves if what they believe is true (more on this below).

Ask open-ended questions to explore concerns

Open-ended questions are meant to get more than a yes-or-no answer.

Ask open-ended questions to help you understand

- What the other person is worried about.
- Where they learned any troubling information.
- What they’ve done to get answers to their questions. For example, you can ask: “How did watching that news report make you feel? What did you do next?”

Be respectful with your questions.

For example, don’t call their concerns “silly.” And don’t ask questions like, “Why would you be worried about that?”

Ask permission to share information

Once you understand the other person’s concerns, ask if you can share information about the vaccines.

If they say no, be careful not to push information on them.

If they say yes, tell them where you get information you trust. The best sources for [factual answers to common questions about COVID-19 and the vaccines](#) include:

- The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- Your [local health department](#)
- Health care providers (such as doctors, nurses, and pharmacists)

Sometimes, sharing quick, accurate answers to common concerns can go a long way toward moving someone from worry to confidence.

If you don't know the answer to their questions, consider offering to help look for information.

Help people find their own reason to get vaccinated

After addressing the other person's concerns with empathy, respect, and facts, steer the conversation from why they haven't gotten vaccinated to why they should.

You can say something like, "I certainly understand how stressful it is to think about COVID. What about COVID has made you think getting vaccinated might be a benefit?"

You may choose to share your own reasons for getting vaccinated, or discuss common goals you may have, like visiting with each other safely.

Everyone who chooses to get vaccinated does it for a reason, such as to:

- Protect themselves from getting sick
- Protect their family
- Protect their children
- Be less anxious
- Visit their parents
- Get back to activities (like seeing friends, resuming work, or returning to school)

Let people know they have options

If someone 12 or older is hesitant about getting an mRNA COVID vaccine, such as the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine, let them know that another vaccine is available. The Novavax vaccine is a protein subunit vaccine, which is a type of vaccine that has been used for many years to protect against other diseases, such as hepatitis B and whooping cough.

Help make people's vaccination happen

Once someone decides why they should get vaccinated, help them commit to getting vaccinated.

Help make their path to vaccination easier. Offer to

- Help make their vaccination appointment. You can find vaccines near you at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).
- Go with them to the appointment, if needed.
- Help them get to their appointment or offer to babysit if they need childcare.

You might also try saying something like: “Let’s go get vaccinated.” This makes getting vaccinated the default choice.

Remember, every person who chooses to get vaccinated brings us all a step closer to moving past the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a trusted messenger to your family and friends, you can play an important role in their decision to get vaccinated.

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