

# What Parents Need to Know About COVID-19 Vaccines



A Conversation Guide for Healthcare Providers

Learn how to answer parents' questions about COVID-19 vaccines.

*Last updated: November 2021*

## How to talk to parents about vaccinating their children against COVID-19

Pediatricians and healthcare providers are trusted sources of information on vaccines. They play a critical role in helping parents and guardians understand the importance of COVID-19 vaccination and assuring them that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for their kids.

Right now, patients and families in your clinics may be wading through a lot of information—and misinformation—to make decisions about COVID-19 vaccinations for themselves and their children. Answering parents' questions can help them feel more confident in choosing to vaccinate their children against COVID-19.

**You're a trusted messenger. But how do you get your message across about COVID-19 vaccination?**

## Four tips for talking to parents about COVID-19 vaccines

Here are some tips to help you through these difficult conversations with parents:

### 1. Give your strong recommendation

Parents frequently consult family members, friends, and web pages for information on vaccines, but **parents consistently rank their child's doctor as their most trusted source for information.**

With this unique position, your strong recommendation is critical for COVID-19 vaccine acceptance. Clearly state your strong recommendation that their child receive a COVID-19 vaccination. You can add a brief supporting statement that uses a mix of science and personal experiences depending on what you think will be most effective with that particular parent or family.

#### *Use phrases like:*



"This vaccine is very important to build protection in your child and your family. I'd highly recommend that everyone in your family get vaccinated."



"I trust this vaccine, and I scheduled an appointment for my own son/nephew/grandson to get vaccinated several months ago."

### 2. Listen to their questions with empathy

Although research shows that most parents in the U.S. and its territories support vaccines, you will still encounter some parents who have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines. **Your willingness to listen to their concerns will play a major role in building trust in your recommendation.**

#### ***When listening, it is important to:***

- Understand the concerns behind parents' questions. Paraphrase what they're asking for to ensure that you're on the same page. Don't respond with information that the parent didn't ask about.
- Validate parents' emotions, fears or concerns. Remember to validate the fact that it is normal to feel worried or with doubts.
- If you encounter questions that you do not know the answer to or information from sources you are unfamiliar with, it is best to acknowledge the parent's concerns and share what you do know. It's okay to mention when you (or the scientific community at large) don't know something. If possible, offer to follow up with them once you have more information.
- You can help by listening without judgment and identifying the root of their concerns.

### **3. Build confidence**

Get to know your patients and establish a rapport. Make eye contact when appropriate and help your patient feel comfortable with sharing their concerns about COVID-19 vaccines with you.

Show respect, treat each person with compassion and without judgment, and gain trust. People tend to stop talking when they feel like they're being cornered or forced into an argument. Let them know that this is a safe space to ask questions.

You should ask questions too! Asking open-ended questions can help you understand what the parent is worried about, where they learned any troubling information, and what they have done to get answers to their questions.

#### ***Use phrases like:***



"How did watching that news report make you feel? What did you do next?"

#### ***Avoid phrases:***



"That's a silly concern" or "Why would you be worried about that?"

### **4. Share information and experiences**

Share the benefits of vaccination with parents and guardians. Show them that vaccination is a safe way to build protection.

Once you understand the parent's question or concern, ask if you can provide some information, and tell them where you get the information you trust. If they agree, they will be more willing to listen to you instead of feeling like you're pushing unwanted information on them.

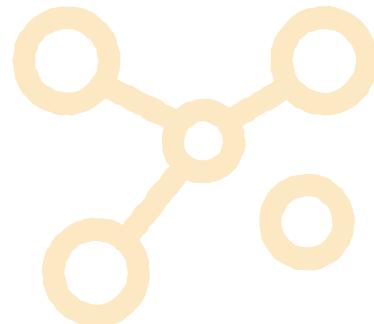
#### **You can give them sources from:**

- [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- [WHO.int](https://www.who.int)
- [FDA.gov](https://www.fda.gov)
- [NIH.gov](https://www.nih.gov)
- [AAP.org](https://www.aap.org)
- [ACOG.org](https://www.acog.org)
- [Americares.org](https://www.americares.org)
- Your local health department website

After addressing concerns with empathy and facts, you can steer the conversation from "why not" to the important reasons that matter to them—their "why." You may choose to share your reasons for getting vaccinated.

#### **Work with parents to agree on at least one action, such as:**

- Scheduling a COVID-19 vaccination appointment,
- Motivating the parent to read additional information you provide them, or
- Encouraging the parent to have a follow-up conversation with you at a later time.



## How to answer some questions that the parents may ask

### Do COVID-19 vaccines affect children's development?

"COVID-19 vaccines have not been shown to affect a child's psychological, biological, or sexual development."



### Who is paying for COVID-19 vaccines?

"The federal government provides COVID-19 vaccines **free of charge** as per CDC's specific guidance/indications to all people living in the United States, regardless of their immigration or health insurance status."



### How can I protect my children from COVID-19?

"Be sure to get everyone in the family who is 5 years old or older vaccinated against COVID-19. To ensure protection all unvaccinated children must wear a mask in public, except for children younger than two years old. Even regardless of vaccine status, mask-wearing and hand hygiene are still recommended as additional tools to safeguard everyone's safety. Choose outdoor activities, because they are safer than indoor ones."



### For more answers to other questions, read:

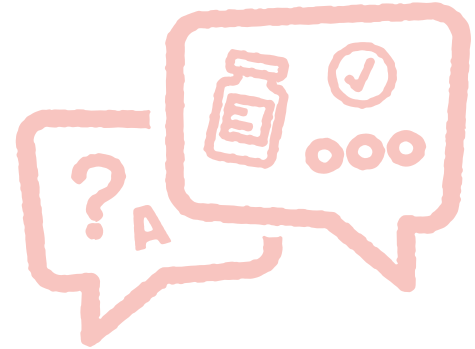
- One-Pager: [COVID-19 vaccine mythbusting handout](#)
- One-Pager: [Discussion guide for building confidence in COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- Trifold: [COVID-19 vaccine answers for parents of children 12 and older](#)
- Trifold: [COVID-19 vaccine answers for people who would like to have a baby one day](#)



## Your strong recommendation is critical for vaccine acceptance.

Tell parents and guardians how important COVID-19 vaccines are to protecting their children's health.

- ✓ COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.
- ✓ COVID-19 vaccines have been used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, including studies in adolescents.
- ✓ Children who are 12 and older receive the same dosage of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine as adults.
- ✓ Your child can't get COVID-19 from any COVID-19 vaccine, including the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.
- ✓ Your child can (but doesn't have to) get multiple vaccines in one visit. Let me know if you have questions about their vaccine schedule.



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Disclaimer: This project was funded in whole by a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant number NU50CK000588. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is an agency within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this resource center do not necessarily represent the policy of CDC or HHS and should not be considered an endorsement by the Federal Government.