

Front Desk and Phone Guide: How to Talk about COVID-19 Vaccines

COVID-19 still takes the lives of dozens of North Carolinians each week. You can help. Whenever someone calls the clinic or stops by the front desk, be sure to ask them about the COVID-19 vaccine. This flowchart can help guide your conversation.

Start the Conversation

Have you thought about getting a COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, I want to get it
(or have already gotten it).



Sounds like you're not quite sure. Tell me more about what you've been hearing about the vaccine. Perhaps I can help clear some things up.

Conversation Tips:

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Focus on understanding their feelings.
- Ask if you can share information with them.
 - If you've gotten vaccinated, you can share how you made that decision with them.
 - You are a trusted source of information.
- See the back page for some responses to common concerns and questions.

I don't know.



I don't want to get it. !

It sounds like you've already put some thought into this. If you're willing to share, what concerns do you have about the vaccines? Maybe I can help answer some questions.

Conversation Tips:

- Listen to learn, not to respond. Try to truly understand why someone is concerned about the vaccines.
- If you had similar questions or concerns, share your decision-making process.
- Validate the effort that they're making. Say something like, "It sounds like you're trying to do the best thing for your health."
- You are a trusted source of information. It's okay to admit when you don't know something.
- See the back page for some responses to common concerns and questions.

Thank them for sharing their concerns with you.
Ask again to see if they want to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Thanks for sharing that with me. I know that making these decisions can be hard. And I want to help you make the best decision for you and your family. Would you like me to help you schedule a time to get your COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, I want to get vaccinated
(or I've already been vaccinated).



Thank you so much for taking this step to protect yourself, your family, and your community from COVID-19.

Encourage an Action Step:

- If possible, vaccinate same day, assist them in scheduling a vaccine appointment, or give them information about an upcoming vaccine event.
 - If your clinic gives vaccines: Help them schedule an appointment before they leave or hang up.
 - If your clinic is not a vaccination site: Direct them to an easy place to get the vaccine like a partner clinic or CVS store. Offer to help them search for a vaccine site using [vaccines.gov/search](https://www.vaccines.gov/search).
- 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.

No, I still don't want it. !

That's your decision to make but thank you again for sharing your thoughts with me. If you think of any more questions, I'd be happy to talk to you more about it.

Conversation Tips:

- Offer to connect them with trusted resources.
- Acknowledge the consideration that they are putting into this decision.
- Thank them for taking the time to speak with you.
- Keep the door open. Let them know that you are available to continue the conversation.

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Americares is a health-focused relief and development organization that responds to people affected by poverty or disaster with life-changing health programs, medicine, medical supplies and emergency aid.

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Common Concerns & Example Responses

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

"You're right, it has gotten political. Look at it from this angle though. This is your choice about your health and the health of your community. I want to make sure that you have enough information to make the best choice for you and your family."

They share concerns that the vaccine was developed too quickly.

"The process to authorize a vaccine is pretty fascinating. But, like most things, it relies on a lot of paperwork. COVID-19 vaccines were developed in record time because scientists built from decades of research, they were given a lot of resources, and people at the FDA brought COVID-19 vaccine applications straight to the top of their to-do list. Since these vaccines have been authorized for some time now, their safety and effectiveness can now be seen in real world data."

They mention blood clots from COVID-19 vaccines.

"It sounds like you've done some research. Yes, the CDC and FDA have noted a connection between these things. This is why they recommend that people get the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine instead of the J&J vaccine. Serious side effects are very rare following any vaccination, including COVID-19 vaccination. The odds of experiencing a serious side effect are extremely low. Any time that we hear about blood clots or heart problems, it can make us worried. Even though we call these very rare side effects "serious," it doesn't mean that they're always fatal. In most cases, these blood clots or heart problems can be quite easy to treat."

They mention heart problems from COVID-19 vaccines.

"That's a great question. Some young men (between 12-17 years old) might feel some swelling around their heart after they get the 2nd dose of an mRNA vaccine. This might sound scary but know that these cases are very rare—about 1 in 58,000. This risk may be lowered by waiting 8 weeks between the 1st and 2nd doses. Most cases are minor. Doctors can treat it with anti-inflammatory medicines or a prescription. It can even get better on its own. Patients often return to their daily activities after their symptoms improve. You should also know that there is a higher chance of getting heart inflammation from a COVID-19 infection than from a COVID-19 vaccine."

They share that they don't really think they need to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

"The vaccine will help prevent you from getting really sick from COVID-19. Even if you had COVID-19 in the past, it doesn't mean that you're immune to getting it again. Lucky for us, surviving a COVID-19 infection does give us some protection against the virus. You can boost your defense even more by getting the vaccine. COVID-19 isn't over. Nearly 40 people in North Carolina die from COVID-19 each week—even now in 2023."

They share concerns about the vaccine causing infertility.

"I can see that this is an important issue for you. There's no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines make it harder for you to get pregnant or to get someone

else pregnant, either now or in the future. It's true that the vaccine can change a person's menstrual cycle for a month or so, but this clears up quickly and doesn't hurt your chances of having a baby. Many experts— even fertility experts— strongly urge people who are trying to have a baby to get a COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine can help protect you and your future family."

They share a concern that fetal tissue was used to create the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

"The Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine was created using the same technology as many other vaccines. It does not contain parts of fetuses or fetal cells. One piece of the vaccine is made in lab-grown copies of cells that originally came from elective abortions that took place over 35 years ago. Since then, the cell lines for these vaccines have been maintained in the lab and no further sources of fetal cells are used to make these vaccines. This might be new information for some people. However, vaccines for chickenpox, rubella and hepatitis A are made in the same way."

They mention concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines containing microchips.

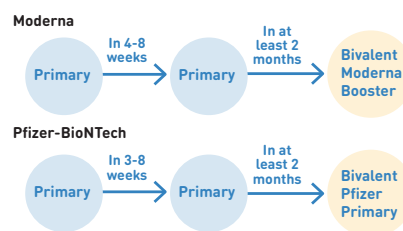
"I appreciate that you brought this issue up. No, the vaccines do not contain a microchip. While shipping companies might use some tracking devices to check the temperature and location of their trucks, these devices are not located inside the vaccines themselves. Nothing in the vaccines can be used to track or gather information about a person."

Frequently Asked Questions & Example Responses

How many doses do I need?

Most people will need to get at least 2 shots of an mRNA vaccine to build their defense against COVID-19 and finish their primary series. Then, they will need to get a booster shot a few months later to "boost" that defense.

People who are 6 months through 4 years old



Most people 6 years old and older only need to get 1 dose of a bivalent mRNA vaccine. They don't need to complete a 2-part primary series of a monovalent vaccine.

People who over 65 years old or older can get a second bivalent booster shot 4 months after their first. Certain immunocompromised people can get one or more bivalent boosters at least two months after their first.

Do I need to get vaccinated if I already had COVID-19?

"Yes, it is recommended that you get vaccinated even if you already had COVID-19. While some studies have shown that getting COVID-19 can offer some defense against future COVID-19 infections, getting vaccinated is a safer and more reliable way to build up protection."

Is it true that the side effects are bad?

"It is understandable to be worried about the side effects. (If possible, share your experience with side effects.) "Side effects can be annoying, but they are also a sign that the vaccine is working. The vaccines still work even if you don't experience any side effects."

What ingredients are in the vaccine?

"Like other vaccines, the vaccines contain 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, microchips, or preservatives. It was not grown in eggs and contains no egg products."

Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant?

"Yes. In fact, medical experts in pregnancy and birth recommend the COVID-19 vaccine for people who are pregnant, lactating, or planning to get pregnant. Data shows that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe during pregnancy. Some studies show that a vaccinated parent can pass antibodies against COVID-19 along to their baby through pregnancy and their milk. Pregnant people have a higher chance of getting very sick from COVID-19 than some other people. The vaccines have been shown to help protect pregnant mothers and their babies."

Is it safe to get my child vaccinated?

"I'm happy to see that you're considering getting your child vaccinated against COVID-19. Yes. COVID-19 vaccines provide a safe and strong defense against COVID-19 for most people 6 months old and older. Kids will feel similar side effects to the vaccines as adults like sore arms,

tiredness, and maybe even a fever. These side effects will most likely go away in a few days."

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

"No. You do not need to show proof of citizenship to get the vaccine. You also do not need to give your social security number to receive the vaccine. You may be asked for it, but you do not need to provide it."

How much do the vaccines cost if I don't have health insurance?

"The good news is that the COVID-19 vaccines and boosters are still free to everyone in the U.S.—even if they don't have insurance. The bad news is that this might not always be the case. If you're interested in getting a COVID-19 vaccine, then I'd recommend that you do it sooner rather than later to make sure that you don't have to pay for it out of pocket."

Can the vaccines cause me to get COVID-19 or alter my DNA?

"No. The vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. The vaccines will also not give you COVID-19. The vaccines teach our body's cells how to recognize and fight the coronavirus."

Can I get vaccinated if I have other medical conditions?

"Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with health conditions like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, or obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19. You can talk to your doctor when you come in to see what COVID-19 vaccine is right for you."