COVID-19: Talking to Patients

As a healthcare provider, **you** can change the course of this pandemic by engaging your patients in conversation about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Quick Tips:

| **CONSISTENCY** in messaging across healthcare providers is key | **DO** share your experience if you feel comfortable doing so | **DON'T** assume a position of authority or use fear tactics | **RESPECT** patient's wishes if they aren't ready for vaccination | **SHARE RESOURCES** to answer questions & schedule vaccination |

Does talking with patients about COVID-19 vaccination matter?

YES!

Research shows healthcare providers are the most trusted source of information on COVID-19 vaccination, **regardless of a patient's gender, ethnicity, or politics (3).**

"My doctor hasn't told me I need it" is a common reason patients report for not getting immunized. **By saying nothing, you are saying something.**

What do I do if my patients don't want to talk about the vaccine?

Meet your patients where they are

Patients present at different stages of vaccine acceptance: **ready (prepared); hesitant (contemplating); or refusal (pre-contemplation).**

- Encourage patients who are <u>ready for vaccination</u> & provide them with resources.
- With <u>hesitant</u> patients, use motivational interviewing to explore concerns and discuss vaccination.
- Respect the wishes of patients who <u>refuse vaccine information</u>. Forcing discussion can undermine trust & make future conversations harder.

How do I raise the topic of COVID-19 vaccination?

Ask permission to talk about vaccines & start with open-ended questions

Ask how patients are coping during this pandemic and what they think about the COVID-19 vaccine. Recognize that patients may mistrust healthcare institutions due to personal, familial, and/or cultural experiences.

Then what should I say about vaccination?

WORDS MATTER: tell your patients that you recommend vaccination

An **unequivocal endorsement** from a healthcare provider is important to vaccine acceptance. However, some words are more effective than others (4,5):

- "Vaccination helps you take **personal control of your life** to reduce your risk for illness."
- "**A safety board approved every study,** and the FDA carefully reviewed every phase of every trial."
- "Vaccination boosts the body's natural defenses against disease to help **protect you and your loved ones.**"

By starting the conversation while respecting your patients wherever they stand, you are paving the way for **future change.**

VACCINE COMMUNICATION TIPS & SOURCES

1. Current ATL Hospital COVID Policies
2. CDC: step by step talking guide
3. Kaiser Family Foundation
4. De Beaumont Foundation
5. AdCouncil COVID Collaboration
6. Vaccines.gov - places to get vaccine

COVID-19: Myths & Concerns

Some data shows it's best to not try to debunk vaccine myths unless <u>explicitly</u> asked about them, but if patients ask about it, you should have a good response!

Info taken from <u>CDC COVID Vaccine Myths Page</u>

Will getting a COVID-19 vaccine cause me to test positive for COVID-19 on a viral test?

No. None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines cause you to test positive on viral tests used to see if you have a current infection.

Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant or would like to have a baby one day?

Yes. If you are pregnant, trying to become pregnant, or want to get pregnant in the future, you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 vaccination causes any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta. In addition, there is no evidence that female or male fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. For more OB-GYN related FAQs, please visit <u>ACOG</u>.

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated for COVID-19?

Yes, you should be vaccinated & boosted regardless of if you already had COVID-19. Research does not yet show how long protection from getting sick again lasts. Although rare, it is possible that you could be re-infected with the virus. Studies <u>do</u> show that vaccination provides a strong boost in protection in people who had COVID-19. Talk to your doctor about when is best for you to get a shot - typically after symptoms resolve but up to 90 days in those who had monoclonal antibody treatment.

Should I get a <u>booster shot</u> even with the possibility of new variants or more boosters in the future?

YES. The COVID-19 vaccines continue to be highly effective in reducing risk of severe disease & death, even against new variants. The vaccines are <u>even more effective</u> when patients receive a booster dose. Current recommendations are to receive either the Pfizer or Moderna booster 5 months after their 2nd dose (or 2 months after J&J).
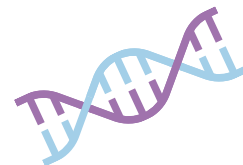
Do any of the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the United States shed or release their components?
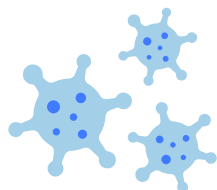
No. Vaccine shedding only occurs when it contains a weakened version of the virus - the vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. do not. mRNA & viral vector are the available types of vaccines.

Will a COVID-19 vaccine alter my DNA?

No. COVID-19 vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA.

MORE INFO ON COMMON Qs & MYTHS:

CDC Vaccine Myths: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html

CDC Vaccine FAQs: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html

WHO Mythbusters: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters

Fulton County COVID-19 hotline: 404-613-8150, 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. weekdays

Georgia Department of Public Health COVID-19 Vaccine Hotline: 888-357-0169