Communicating About COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Risk

Most people in the United States are planning to get a COVID-19 vaccine. However, some may want more information, including information about the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. Take the time to listen to people's concerns and answer their questions. This can help them become confident in their decision to get vaccinated. **Strong confidence** in the vaccines within communities leads to more vaccinations, which in turn lead to fewer COVID-19 illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths.

> **Remember: If a person has concerns or questions, this doesn't necessarily mean they won't accept a COVID-19 vaccine. Sometimes people simply want your answers to their questions.**

Consider principles from Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication when communicating about COVID-19 vaccine safety.

- **Be first.** Share information and what is known, what is not known, and what is being done to fill in the gaps as quickly as possible.
- **Be right.** Ensure the information that you share is accurate in order to establish credibility.
- **Be credible.** Communicate honest, timely, and scientific evidence so the public can trust your information and guidance.
- **Express empathy.** Acknowledge what people are feeling and consider their perspectives when providing recommendations.
- **Promote action.** Keep action messages simple, short, and easy to remember.
- **Show respect.** Actively listen to the issues and solutions brought up by local communities and leaders.

When communicating about COVID-19 vaccine safety and risks, be sure to emphasize:

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.
  - » Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.
- COVID-19 vaccines meet all safety standards.
  - » The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) carefully reviews all safety data from clinical trials and authorizes emergency vaccine use only when the expected benefits outweigh potential risks.
  - » The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), a group of immunization and public health experts, reviews all safety data before recommending any COVID-19 vaccine for use in the United States.

- **COVID-19 vaccines will be continually** monitored for safety. FDA and CDC will continue to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines to make sure even very rare side effects are identified.
- **After COVID-19 vaccination, many people will have** mild side effects.
  - » Pain or swelling at the injection site, fever, chills, tiredness, or a headache are common and can be a sign that the vaccine is working.
  - » A small number of people have had a severe allergic reaction (called "anaphylaxis") after COVID-19 vaccination, but this is **extremely** rare. When it does happen, vaccination providers have medicines available that they can use to effectively and immediately treat the reaction.
- **The known risks associated with getting sick with COVID-19 far outweigh any potential risks of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, especially for people at increased risk of severe COVID-19 illness.**

Additional CDC Resources and References

Education for Patients

COVID-19 vaccines
People at Increased Risk
What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine
Ensuring the Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines in the U.S.

Tips for Providers

COVID-19 Vaccination Communication Toolkit
Vaccinate with Confidence
Answering Your Questions About the COVID-19 Vaccines
Quick Answers for Healthcare Professionals to Common Questions People May Ask about COVID-19 Vaccines
Making a Strong Recommendation for COVID-19 Vaccination
Answering Patients' Questions

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention