

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

HOW TO SPEAK WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES

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The COVID-19 pandemic has created unique challenges for people worldwide. As the pandemic wears on, it becomes increasingly difficult to cope with the alarming updates and the information overload that has saturated daily life. The new normal demands adherence to both mandated procedures and individual preventive measures. While COVID-19 vaccines offer the best protection against disease, they also raise a host of additional questions and concerns, which are typical reactions to anything new. People question the vaccines' necessity, safety and efficacy.

More than 170 million Americans have been vaccinated, while others remain uncertain and in search of answers. Family and friends can help their undecided loved ones voice their concerns and access the resources they need to make an informed decision.

Effective Communication

Opening a conversation on the topic of the COVID-19 vaccine need not be awkward. The communication tips below can help.

Listen

The most effective communicators are those who place the greatest emphasis on listening — without judging. Empathy, kindness and patience help reticent people open up and share their doubts and questions. It is important to acknowledge their concerns and not to rush the conversation.

Help them articulate their concerns by asking open-ended questions and providing straightforward, non-judgmental answers.



Ask Permission

While it may be tempting to provide information, ask permission first. It is likely that people already have some foundational knowledge and are struggling with specific issues. Soliciting their permission is respectful and keeps the conversation moving forward.

Consider Reputable Sources

Acknowledge the jumble of information in circulation, and offer your friend or family member trusted sources. Accurate, reliable, up-to-the-moment education is available online at [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and from local health departments. They may also want to speak with their healthcare provider.

Discuss the Reasons

Everyone is motivated differently – even when it comes to health. The why of vaccination is easily the most important consideration in deciding in favor of vaccination. While some people value the COVID-19 vaccine as the best means for preventing illness for themselves and their family, others may welcome the vaccine’s influence in resuming social activities or travel. Help them uncover the motivation most meaningful to them.

Help with the Process

Some people are not comfortable or proficient in navigating the healthcare system or may be nervous about the vaccine process itself. Once they decide to get vaccinated, help them make an appointment and offer to transport/accompany them to the vaccine venue.



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Visit the CDC website for more information on how to talk about COVID-19 vaccines:
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/talk-about-vaccines.html



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