

FOR PROVIDERS: Engaging in Effective COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations



1. Start from a place of understanding and empathy

Acknowledge the disruption that COVID-19 has caused in all our lives and acknowledge the fear and uncertainty that many are experiencing. This allows for an opportunity to recognize common concerns that could be addressed by a vaccine. It is important to establish a culture of partnership in the discussion.

- Talk to the patient about their experiences with COVID-19
- Use open ended questions. For example, “What do you think about the advantages of vaccination?” or “What do you know about the COVID-19 vaccination?”

2. Assume patients will want to be vaccinated but may not know when to expect it

It can be concerning to those interested in the vaccine that they cannot be vaccinated right away. This adds to the sense of uncertainty and fear. Patients should be encouraged to continue to take steps to protect themselves from COVID-19 and you should reassure them that you will continue to share updates as they become available. General information you can provide:

- Limited vaccine doses will be available in 2020, but the supply will increase substantially in 2021
- The goal is for everyone to get vaccinated, but this will not happen right away

3. Give your strong recommendation

As healthcare providers, you are a trusted source of information. Let them know that you plan to recommend the COVID-19 vaccine for them. Share the importance of COVID-19 vaccines to protect their health, as well as the health of those around them and use your own personal plans for vaccination to help the conversation.

- “I strongly recommend you get the COVID-19 vaccine once it becomes widely available.”
- “I believe in this vaccine so strongly I plan to get it myself as soon as it is available to me.” or “I believe in this vaccine so strongly I have been immunized myself.”

4. Listen and respond to questions

Listening builds trust in you and your recommendation. Seek to understand concerns and provide information in an understandable manner. For patient’s unsure or curious about the vaccine, elicit their knowledge, share information/advice, and then verify understanding.

- “You have expressed that it is important to protect yourself and your family from COVID-19 [Summarize their thoughts] and I see you have done a good deal of research on the vaccine [Affirmation of their experience and knowledge]. If it is okay, I can provide you some additional information about the vaccine and what we know of its safety [Elicit permission to provide more information].

5. Wrapping up the conversation

Once you have answered their questions, let them know you are open to continue the conversation. Encourage them to take additional action through:

- scheduling a follow up appointment
- reading additional information provided about the vaccine from trusted resources

Source: CDC, *Making a Strong Recommendation for COVID-19 Vaccination*. 2020