

Open the Discussion

APPROACH Start the conversation as early as possible with your patient.
ASK "Have you thought about whether or not you will get the COVID-19 vaccine when you are eligible?"
INTERNAL REMINDERS:

- ✓ Do not assume vaccine acceptance from your patient.
- ✓ Encourage sharing what they have been hearing, positive and negative.
- ✓ People often remember the earliest information they hear, so it is important to have this discussion early.

Unsure *Patient is reluctant to make a firm decision*

APPROACH Acknowledge and address concerns; don't provide reassurance prematurely. (See page 2 for common concerns and FAQs.)
SAY "Sounds like you're feeling unsure. Tell me more about what you've been hearing about the vaccine."
 "I also wondered/heard about that. Here's what I learned after looking into it."
INTERNAL REMINDERS

- ✓ Be empathetic and thank patient for sharing concerns.
- ✓ Link vaccine acceptance to patient's hopes and goals.
- ✓ Cite your trustworthy sources of information. To facilitate trust, acknowledge uncertainty where it exists.
- ✓ Allow the patient to bring family or other community members into the decision-making process, if requested.
- ✓ Reinforce your personal decision to get vaccinated.

Opposed *Patient declines vaccine*

APPROACH Acknowledge and ask permission to learn more. (See page 2 for common concerns and FAQs.)
ASK "OK, I'd like to learn more about what is most concerning to you. Would you be willing to share your concerns about the vaccine?"
Consider your patient's unique viewpoint. They may have concerns due to personal experiences in the health care system or mistrust because of the history of abuse in the medical system due to racism and other forms of discrimination. They could also be concerned about safety because of the speed of the trials, their age or disability, disinformation, or mistrust of the government.
INTERNAL REMINDERS

- ✓ Your influence as a messenger matters, you are viewed as a trusted source of information. Ask permission to share your recommendation.
- ✓ If you had similar questions or concerns, share your decision-making thought process.
- ✓ To facilitate trust, acknowledge uncertainty where it exists.
- ✓ Reinforce your personal decision to get vaccinated.
- ✓ Link vaccine acceptance to patient's hopes and goals.

FOLLOW-UP After addressing concerns, provide strong recommendation for vaccination and ask again about willingness to get vaccinated.

Yes
Patient wants vaccination

Inclined *Patient is interested in vaccination*

APPROACH Affirm and recommend next step.
SAY "I'm glad we had this discussion and I appreciate that you shared your concerns with me today. Making an informed decision is important."

ENCOURAGE AN ACTION STEP

- ✓ Vaccinate same day, or schedule vaccine appointment.
- ✓ If not eligible yet, discuss eligibility timeline for the vaccine. If possible, contact them when you know they are eligible.
- ✓ Ask them to read information you provide them.
- ✓ Ask them to share the information they learned to support family and friends in making the same decision, if they feel comfortable doing so.

Refusing *Patient is not interested in further discussion*

APPROACH Advise and educate (alternative resources); provide opportunity to revisit discussion and offer additional resources from trusted sources.
SAY "This is definitely your decision. If you have any questions at all, I am here for you."
ASK "Would it be helpful for me to provide more information?"
PROVIDE INFORMATION

- ✓ One sheet handout (variety of separate topics) addressing any concerns that may have been stated.
- ✓ Websites with culturally-appropriate information.
- ✓ Phone number to call with any questions if they want to talk later.

Common Concerns & Example Responses

They've experienced racism or faced another form of discrimination when receiving medical care.

"Your experience sounds frustrating and hurtful. I've heard from other patients about negative experiences they've had when getting medical care, and I realize that discrimination exists in health care. It upsets me that this is still happening."

After listening and further exploring the patient's concerns, consider: "The vaccine is strongly recommended, but completely voluntary. I only want to make sure that you get the protection/care you need."

They mention harmful medical practices or experiments on Black and Indigenous people in the past.

"You're absolutely right. The history of medical harm should not be ignored. I acknowledge that scientists engaged in many harmful and racist practices in the name of medicine. We are trying to handle the COVID-19 vaccine differently and trying to be as transparent as possible. I want to make sure this feels like the right decision for you."

They share concerns about the vaccine that aren't factual.

"I've heard others share similar concerns, so you aren't alone in feeling that way. Would it be OK if I shared my medical perspective on this issue?"

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

"You are right, it has gotten political. Would it be OK if I shared my medical perspective on this issue?" If granted permission: "I've looked at the results, and this vaccine does really protect people from COVID. I want you to have the benefit of it."

They share concerns about J&J efficacy compared to the two dose vaccines.

"There are a lot of efficacy numbers being reported, and often times the numbers are reported out of context. The most important thing to know is clinical trials showed this vaccine to be highly effective at preventing severe disease and hospitalization, which included testing against new strains from other countries. I have no concerns about this vaccine giving you excellent protection against getting sick from COVID-19."

They don't trust Johnson & Johnson because of the company's history with Black women.*

"I completely understand why you wouldn't trust Johnson & Johnson due to their history of harm targeting the Black and Latinx community, particularly Black women. It is inexcusable that their harmful marketing tactics led to increased risk of cancer. While I understand the worries you might have about their products, I can tell you that this vaccine has been shown to be safe and effective (see FAQ section for more information). It's possible that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine may be the first or only vaccine available to you so I recommend getting it when you can. Can I answer any other questions or concerns about the vaccine or the vaccine trials for you?"

*In 2020, Johnson & Johnson (parent company of Janssen Pharmaceuticals) agreed to pay \$100 million to settle more than 1,000 lawsuits (out of more than 20,000) alleging that its talc-based baby powder causes cancer. Internal documents show that Johnson & Johnson heavily marketed its talcum powder to Black women for feminine hygiene. They did not include a warning that their talc-based baby powder product could contain carcinogens.

Frequently Asked Questions & Example Responses

Do you think I should get vaccinated?

"I strongly recommend you get vaccinated. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. If you still get infected after you get vaccinated, the vaccine may prevent serious illness. By getting vaccinated, you may also help protect people around you."

How much does it cost?

"The vaccine is provided at no cost."

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

"You do not need to show proof of citizenship to get the vaccine. Regardless of citizenship or immigration status, all eligible people living or working in Washington can get vaccinated."

What are the side effects?

"The most common side effects are a sore arm, tiredness, headache, and muscle pain. These symptoms are a sign that the vaccine is prompting an immune response as intended. For most people, these side effects occurred within two days of getting the vaccine and lasted about a day."

How is this vaccine different than the mRNA ones?

"Johnson & Johnson's shot is a viral vector vaccine, which uses a safe version of a different virus (a cold virus) as a vehicle to deliver protective instructions to your body. Your body's immune system then makes antibodies that know how to fight COVID-19. The vaccine does not cause infection with COVID-19, or that cold virus. It takes about two weeks after one dose to be fully protected."

What ingredients are in the vaccine?

"Like other vaccines, this vaccine contains fat, salts, and sugars to help it 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, preservatives, or tracking devices. It was not grown in eggs and contains no egg products."

"Is there a specific ingredient you are concerned about? Tell me more about what you've heard."

Is it safe? Was it tested in people like me?

"Yes, it is safe. The FDA has authorized this vaccine after reviewing a lot of evidence carefully. Independent experts confirmed that it met high safety standards. At least 38% of all global participants in the vaccine trials identified as Black/African American, Asian, or American Indian or Alaskan Native and about half were older adults. In addition, about 45% of all participants identified as Hispanic/Latino. There were no significant safety concerns identified in these or any other groups."

Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or am planning to have a baby one day?

"Yes. Medical experts in pregnancy recommend all people who are pregnant or may consider becoming pregnant should be offered the vaccine. Getting vaccinated is a personal choice. Current safety data is limited but does not indicate any safety concerns for pregnant people. Normal side effects should be expected such as sore arm, tiredness, headache or muscle pain. We can talk through the decision to get vaccinated together."

Can the vaccine cause me to get COVID or alter my DNA?

"No, you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine and your DNA is not affected. Viral vector vaccines use a safe version of a different virus (a cold virus) to deliver instructions to a cell. The vaccine does not cause infection with that cold virus, or COVID-19. The material delivered by the vaccine does not alter or interfere with a person's DNA."

For other frequently asked questions, visit: www.doh.wa.gov/covidvaccine/faq

The best way for your patient to get up-to-date information about when and how to get vaccinated is by visiting the Washington State Department of Health website CovidVaccineWA.org or by calling the Department of Health phone line **1-800-525-0127**, then press #. (For interpretive services, say your language when the call is answered.)

Adapted from:

1. Communication skills for the COVID vaccine. VitalTalk. vitaltalk.org/guides/communication-skills-for-the-covid-vaccine/. Published January 8, 2021.
2. Gagneur A. Motivational interviewing: A powerful tool to address vaccine hesitancy. Can Commun Dis Rep. 2020;46(4):93-97. Published 2020 Apr 2. doi:10.14745/ccdr.v46i04a06
3. Opel DJ, Lo B, Peek ME. Addressing Mistrust About COVID-19 Vaccines Among Patients of Color. Ann Intern Med. Published online February 9, 2021 at doi.org/10.7326/M21-0055. doi:10.7326/m21-0055



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