

# Discussion Guide for Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines for People Experiencing Homelessness

Conversations about the COVID-19 vaccines with your guests, neighbors, and clients may take many different forms and may happen in many different settings. Below you will find a proposed flow for those conversations.

## Start the Conversation

Have you thought about whether or not you will get the COVID-19 vaccine?



Yes, I will get it.



I don't know.

Sounds like you're not quite sure. Tell me more about what you've been hearing about the vaccine.

### Conversation Tips:

- ✓ See the back page for common concerns and FAQs.
- ✓ If you've decided to get vaccinated, you can share how you made that decision with them.
- ✓ Acknowledge their feelings.
- ✓ You are a trusted source of information. Acknowledge where there is still uncertainty.
- ✓ Ask if they want family or other community members to be part of the decision-making process.



I don't think I want to get it.

Can I ask you a question: What information would you need for you to consider the vaccine?

### Conversation Tips:

- ✓ See the back page for common concerns and FAQs.
- ✓ If you had similar questions or concerns, share your decision-making process.
- ✓ Acknowledge their feelings and experiences.
- ✓ You are a trusted source of information. Acknowledge where there is uncertainty.

## Follow-up

Thank them for sharing their concerns with you and ask again about willingness to get vaccinated.



I want to get vaccinated.

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:

- ✓ If possible, vaccinate same day, assist them in scheduling a vaccine appointment, or give them information about an upcoming vaccine event.
- ✓ If they feel comfortable doing so, encourage them to share the information they learned to support their friends and community members in making the same decision.



I don't want to talk about it anymore.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me, I appreciate it. It's your right to say no. If you have any more thoughts after our conversation, I'm happy to talk to you more about it.

### Conversation Tips:

- ✓ Provide opportunity to revisit discussion and offer additional resources from trusted sources.
- ✓ Provide a phone number to call or where to find you with any questions if they want to talk later.
- ✓ Offer to call them or reach them another way to continue the conversation later.

The best way 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](https://www.covidvaccine.wa.gov) 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.)

## Common Concerns & Example Responses

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

"I'm sorry that happened to you. It was horrible and wrong. Your experience sounds frustrating and hurtful." After listening and further exploring their concerns, consider saying: "The vaccine will help prevent you from getting really sick from COVID-19. It is strongly recommended, but completely voluntary."

### 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. Scientists have engaged in many harmful and racist practices in the name of medicine. The COVID-19 vaccine is being handled very differently. Can I tell you what I know about the vaccine and the vaccine trials? I want to make sure this feels like the right decision for you."

### 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. Can I answer any other questions or concerns about the vaccine or the vaccine trials 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 share what I've learned?"

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

"You are right, it has gotten political. Would it be OK if I shared what I know about the vaccine?" 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 that they don't really think they need to get it.

"The vaccine will help prevent you from getting really sick from COVID-19. The more people that get the vaccine, the sooner places will be able to open back up and we'll be able to be inside together. It is strongly recommended, but completely voluntary."

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

"There are a lot of efficacy numbers being reported, which can be confusing. The most important thing to know is that the studies showed the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to be very good at preventing severe illness and hospitalization. All of the vaccines prevented a majority of people from getting any COVID-19 symptoms at all."

### They share a concern that fetal tissue was used to create the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

"The Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine was created using the same technology as many other vaccines. It does not contain parts of fetuses or fetal cells. One piece of the vaccine is made in lab-grown copies of cells that originally came from elective abortions that took place over 35 years ago. Since then, the cell lines for these vaccines have been maintained in the lab and no further sources of fetal cells are used to make these vaccines. This might be new information for some people. However, vaccines for chickenpox, rubella and hepatitis A are made in the same way."

## Frequently Asked Questions & Example Responses

### How many doses do I need?

Manufacturer	Number of doses	Age you can get the vaccine
Pfizer-BioNTech	2 doses, 21 days apart	16+
Moderna	2 doses, 28 days apart	18+
Johnson & Johnson	1 dose	18+

### 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 working. For most people, these side effects happen within two days of getting the vaccine and last about a day. Side effects are more common after the second dose than the first dose for two dose vaccines." Let them know if there will be a place for them to stay or rest to recover from any side effects.

### What ingredients are in the vaccine?

"Like other vaccines, the vaccines contain fat, salts, and sugars to help them 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, metals, tracking devices, or preservatives. It was not grown in eggs and contains no egg products."

### Are the vaccines safe? Were they tested on people like me?

"Yes, they are safe. The FDA authorized these vaccines after reviewing a lot of evidence carefully. Independent experts confirmed that it met high safety standards. For the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, about 30% of U.S. participants in the vaccine trials were Hispanic, Black/African American, Asian or American Indian/Alaska Native and about half were older adults. For the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, at least 38% of all participants in the vaccine trials identified as Black/African American, Asian or American Indian/Alaska 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 for any of the trials."

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

"No. 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."

### How much does it cost?

"The vaccine is provided at no cost."

### Can I get the vaccine if I am pregnant or want 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 more about this decision."

### Can the vaccines cause me to get COVID-19 or alter my DNA?

"No. The vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way. The vaccines will also not give you COVID-19. The vaccines teach our body's cells how recognize and fight the coronavirus."

### Can I get vaccinated if I have other medical conditions?

"Yes. COVID-19 vaccination is especially important for people with health conditions like heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, or obesity. People with these conditions are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19."

For other frequently asked questions, visit: [doh.wa.gov/covidvaccine/faq](https://doh.wa.gov/covidvaccine/faq)

\*In 2020, Johnson & Johnson 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.

Adapted from:

1. Communication skills for the COVID vaccine. VitalTalk. [vitaltalk.org/guides/communication-skills-for-the-covid-vaccine/](https://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 Comm 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 [acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M21-0055](https://doi.org/10.7326/M21-0055). doi:10.7326/m21-0055



DOH 820-149 March 2021

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127.  
Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay)  
or email [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).