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Conversation Guide for this Holiday Season

To support families and friends enjoying their holidays while protecting themselves and others from COVID-19, Made To Save compiled [safe gathering guidelines](#) and the following conversation guide for talking to your friends and family about the COVID-19 vaccines and discussing COVID-19 precautions during holiday gatherings.

We acknowledge that conversations about the vaccines and boundary-setting with friends and family can be difficult and fraught with emotions. We hope that these guidelines will be helpful as you discuss COVID-19 vaccines and safety precautions with your family and friends.

Assess your risk level and boundaries

COVID-19 safety boundaries and comfort levels may vary depending on your individual and your family situation. For example, maybe you or someone in your household is at higher risk of bad outcomes for COVID-19, or is under the age of 5 and not yet eligible for the vaccine. You will have to set safety measures to protect them or yourself, such as ensuring that everyone who can get vaccinated gets vaccinated. Be aware that not everyone's sense of risk and boundaries will match your own and be clear about your own boundaries. Consider your and your attendees' risk factors when making decisions on whether and how to host or attend an event.

Before the event, decide what you are comfortable with: Are you open to gathering with friends and family who may or may not be vaccinated? What other precautions seem reasonable for you and your family? Some of the safety measures you could implement, communicate and discuss in advance with your friends and family are:

- **Vaccination requirements for eligible guests:** vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your loved ones against COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is now

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available for ages 5 and up. Free vaccine appointments are available at [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)

- **Asking guests to get tested before the event or offering rapid tests for guests to get tested at the door if that's possible:** asking all attendees to get tested before the gathering can add another layer of safety, especially if there is not enough time for everyone to get fully vaccinated before the event or if there are individuals at high risk in attendance (including children 0-4 who are not yet eligible to get vaccinated). However, given that rapid tests can be pricey and in short supply, it's good to have other mitigation options in place too, such as masking indoors and gathering in highly ventilated places.

Find more information on how to gather safely during this holiday season in [Made To Save's How To Gather Safely Guide](#) and check the [CDC page on Holiday Celebrations](#) for more information.

Why Vaccine Conversations Work

The best way to protect yourself, your family members, and friends is to ensure that everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated is fully vaccinated before the event. As you plan for the holidays, you may want to have conversations with your friends and family about the COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccine conversation can be difficult, but they are effective: More than one-third (36%) of people who did not want the vaccine in January, 2021 said that they spoke with someone who persuaded them to get vaccinated. As someone the person already knows and trusts, you can find out what is concerning your friend or family member about the vaccine, relate on a personal level, and share information to help them on their journey to get vaccinated.

In addition to having vaccine conversations, you may want to ask for your guests' input and collaborate on creating a safety plan that includes multiple layers of protection for vaccinated, partially vaccinated, unvaccinated, and high risk guests. The following are some guidelines that can help you have these conversations:

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Tips for Having Effective Vaccine Conversations: Use the TEO Method

- T- Build Trust and Understanding
- E - Express Empathy
- O - Help them find their OWN reason for getting vaccinated

Let's look at the TEO method in more depth:

T - Build Trust and Understanding

- **Listen to understand, not to respond.** Don't form your reply before the other person is done speaking.
- **Repeat back or state a summary.** "Thank you for sharing that with me. What I am hearing you say is [INSERT SUMMARY STATEMENT]...."

E - Express Empathy

- **Express empathy and connect on values:** "I hear that you really want to spend the holidays together as a family and you also feel nervous about making such an important decision like vaccinating your children; it makes sense that you feel that way."
- **Respond without judgement and avoid making assumptions.**
 - Pandemic burnout
 - "I understand what you mean, this pandemic has been long and rough and I also wish it were over. That is why I would like to be able to spend time with my family this holiday season safely."
 - Worried that other relatives may not want to follow these precautions
 - "I completely understand that concern, it would be a shame if everyone was not able to attend the gathering because I miss everyone and look forward to seeing each other again safely"
 - Inconvenient
 - "I understand that taking these precautions on top of hosting everyone for the holidays must be a handful!"

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O- Help people find their own reason to get vaccinated and adopt other safety precautions.

- **Ask for permission to share**
 - “You know, I’ve heard that concern before and I’ve looked into it. Would you mind if I shared with you what I found out?”
- **Pair shared values with key facts.**
 - *“I am grateful that my family has remained safe during this pandemic and I would like to keep them safe as we gather. Getting vaccinated is the best way we can gather safely together during the Holidays.”*
- **Help your friends and family find their own reason**
 - *“What are your thoughts on how we can keep our family and friends safe, healthy and comfortable when we meet for the holidays?”*
 - *“I am getting vaccinated / I am getting my children vaccinated so that I can keep everyone safe during our holiday gathering. What benefits do you see in getting vaccinated?”*

Starting the Conversation

Start the conversation as early as possible. Postponing a conversation about COVID-19 boundaries until the time of the gathering may risk:

- Your boundaries not properly being taken into consideration
- Family members feeling disrespected
- The host scrambling to enforce boundaries

Conversation Starters

- If you are not hosting:
 - “I was wondering what COVID-19 safety precautions would be in place at your gathering.”
 - “I heard that the CDC released guidelines for safer holiday gatherings, should we review those together?”
 - “My child is not yet fully vaccinated and I was wondering if we could think of ways to keep our family safe?”
- If you are hosting:

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- “As I plan our holiday gathering, I want to make sure we can all have a good time and stay safe. How do you feel about the COVID-19 vaccines?”
- “I am planning on taking COVID-19 safety precautions at my gathering, is there anyone from your household who needs to be taken into specific consideration?”
- “I would like to make sure that everyone feels comfortable at the gathering, would you mind helping me create COVID-19 safety measures?”

Ending the Conversation

- **Host**

- List out the COVID-19 safety requirements for the event and encourage getting vaccinated
- Offer a space for those who are not vaccinated to get in contact about compromises

- **Attendee**

- Offer to help write the covid safety precautions and requirements to send out to the guests
- Offer to help call the other guests and collaborate on safety measures
- Bring tools for a safer gathering
 - Area fan for ventilation
 - Space heater for outdoor gathering
 - A pack of facemasks for indoor use

- **Both Hosts and Attendees for ending vaccine conversations**

- Offer to have another conversation about getting vaccinated later.
- Offer to help find an appointment to get vaccinated
- Offer a ride to a vaccination site if possible
- Share info about nearby vaccine sites
- Offer to get back to them if they want to create a list of concerns that require follow up
- Plan to check in in a few weeks about any concerns

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Additional Resources

- [Talking to Parents about the COVID-19 Vaccines for Children](#)
- [Guidelines for Having a Vaccine Conversation](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)