



Talking to Your Friends and Family about the COVID-19 Vaccines

A guide for having impactful conversations rooted in empathy about the COVID-19 vaccines.



The information in this module has been aggregated from the CDC and other trusted medical resources and is not medical advice. If you have additional questions we encourage you to speak to a medical provider.

The information in this module was last updated on May 3rd, 2022.



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Content

- **Context (4)**
- **Why have vaccine conversations?
(5-7)**
- **FAQs and Common Access Barriers
(8-14)**
- **Guidelines for a Vaccine Conversation
(15-23)**
- **Resources (24)**

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save**

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Made To Save was a national public education and grassroots mobilization effort to build trust in the COVID-19 vaccines and increase access for communities of color whose health inequities have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Over the course of 17 months, Made to Save built a coalition of 1600 organizations nationwide, completed outreach to over 5 million individuals, initiated over 625,000 conversations about the COVID-19 vaccine, held over 5,500 events and directly vaccinated 25,000+ individuals in some of the hardest hit communities nationwide.

Made to Save was an initiative of Civic Nation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

The Made To Save initiative wrapped up at the end of May, 2022.

Why Have Vaccine Conversations?

Having conversations about the COVID-19 vaccines may be intimidating or overwhelming when a friend or family member is still unvaccinated. Let's learn about why these conversations are important!



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Friends and family may have questions or doubts about getting vaccinated

Conversations can support Friends and Family in processing their thoughts.

Our loved ones may have..

- **Heard some misinformation**
- **Heard some disinformation**

You can share your own vaccination journey of why you decided to get vaccinated.

- **Did you have any doubts or worries yourself about getting vaccinated?**
- **What made you decide to get vaccinated?**



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You are a Trusted Messenger: *A friend, family, or community member that a person can trust and connect with on a personal level.*

As a trusted messenger, you can **find out why folks are concerned** about the vaccine, **relate** on a personal level, **and share information** to help them on their journey to get vaccinated.

You do not need to be a medical expert! Effective conversations about the vaccine are **rooted in active listening and empathy**. Connect over shared values and guide the person to make their own decision.

In the advocacy space, conversations among friends and family are **5X times more effective than conversations among strangers, when it comes to getting vaccinated.**



Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation and Analyst Institute.

FAQs and Common Access Barriers

While you are having conversations with your friends and family, you may come across common concerns about the vaccines or you may discover that they are facing access barriers. Let's learn more about common concerns and access barriers to the vaccine and how to help!



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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Vaccines

All authorized and approved vaccines followed every step required by the Food and Drug Administration. Governments and companies around the world invested more money in the COVID-19 vaccines than any other vaccine, and medical researchers have been working on these vaccine technologies for decades. Bureaucratic hurdles were lifted and research was shared at a scale never seen before to enable fast vaccine development.

How were the vaccines developed so quickly?

Sources: CDC and White House



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Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Vaccines

**Will the
vaccines give
me COVID-19?**

No. None of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.



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Source: CDC

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Vaccines

Yes. People who are young and healthy can still get infected with COVID-19 and infect others. Although people who are young and healthy are less likely to have severe symptoms if infected, young and healthy people can still have bad symptoms. In fact, one out of 10 people with mild COVID-19 infections end up with moderate to severe symptoms that last for at least 8 months.

Do I really need the vaccine if I am young and healthy?

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Vaccines

I've already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need the vaccine?

Yes. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine after you recover from COVID-19 infection provides added protection against COVID-19. People who already had COVID-19 and do not get vaccinated after their recovery are more likely to get COVID-19 again than those who get vaccinated after their recovery.

Source: CDC



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Common Access Barriers

While you are having these conversations, you may realize that your friends or family are facing access barriers to the vaccine. That is why it is important not to assume that the person does not want the vaccine.

- **Listen** for what is holding them back
- **Help** them overcome the access barrier!

Don't know where to go to get vaccinated

Help them find a local vaccination site at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) ([vacunas.gov](https://www.vacunas.gov))

Lacks access to internet or needs language assistance

You can share the vaccine hotline: 1-800-232-0233

Working extensive hours

Help find a vaccine site with extended hours.

Common Access Barriers

As of 4/26/22, vaccine funding for the uninsured has run out and vaccines may no longer be free of cost for the uninsured everywhere in the country.

- Go to **cdc.gov** or to your local health department to find the most current information on the COVID-19 vaccines.
- Check **healthcare.gov** to see if you qualify for free or low cost health insurance.

Concerned about the Cost

Share that vaccines are free in many cases*

Uninsured

**Share that vaccines are available for everyone.*
Check [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) to see if they qualify for free or low cost health insurance.**

Undocumented

Share that vaccines are available regardless of immigration status



***This content is up-to-date as of 5/2/22. The availability of free vaccines may change depending on whether or not Congress approves funding.**

Guidelines for Having Vaccine Conversations

The most impactful conversations about the COVID-19 vaccines require active listening and empathy. Let's learn how to leverage your position as a trusted messenger in order to have productive conversations that are more likely to guide your loved one to choose getting vaccinated!



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How to Approach having a COVID-19 Vaccine Conversation

These are some of the key things to do while having a conversation with an unvaccinated friend or family member that will help your conversation be impactful while avoiding the conversation escalating and becoming unproductive.

- **Do not** tell people what they should do or think.
- Listen and respond **authentically** to their concerns
- You **do not** have to be a healthcare expert to have impactful conversations
- Always end the conversation by **offering to help!**
 - Help them **make a plan** to get vaccinated
 - Encourage them to make a list of concerns that you will check out for them
 - **Plan to have another conversation** with them to follow up on their concerns



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Use the TEO Method!

T – Build Trust and Understand

E – Express Empathy

O – Help Them Find Their Own Reason



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Starting the Conversation

Assume people intend to get vaccinated unless they indicate otherwise.

Speak in your own voice and adapt the conversation to your circumstances:

- *"I see so many of our [CHURCH FRIENDS/COUSINS/CLASSMATES/COWORKERS/NEIGHBORS] are getting vaccinated!"*
- *"I just saw my family/friends for the first time after we got vaccinated "*
- *"Do you want me to help you get an appointment?"*
- *"Did you hear that the Walgreens down the block is a vaccine site?"*



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T – Building Trust and Understanding

- **Listen to understand, not to respond.** Don't form your reply before the person is done speaking. Invite them to share until you feel you understand what's holding them back. Listen for access barrier issues and for how you can help.
- **Ask questions to get to the root of the concern.** Ask questions until you think you understand the root of their concern. Prompt them to tell you more if needed.
 - **EX:** *" I hear you are worried about the side effects, tell me more!"*
- **Repeat back or state a summary.** Repeat back their concern to ensure that you understand fully where they are coming from.
 - **EX:** *" What i am hearing you say is that you are worried about side effects is that correct?"*



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E – Express Empathy

- **Express empathy and connect on values.** Acknowledge and relate to what the person is sharing. Validating concerns, expressing empathy, and demonstrating that you understand will help make the person feel more comfortable.
- **Respond without judgement and avoid making assumptions.** Responding with judgement or making assumptions may cause the conversation to escalate and become unproductive. To retain the trust that you have as a trusted messenger, respond empathetically to any vaccine concerns.
 - **EX:** *“I see where you’re coming from. It can be hard to know what information on social media is real when there is so much misinformation and clickbait.”*



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O – Help them find their Own Reason to Get Vaccinated

- **Ask for permission to share:** Asking first before sharing facts about COVID-19 and the vaccines will avoid the conversation turning into a lecture. If a person agrees first to hear facts and stories, they will be more receptive to them.
- **Pair shared values with key facts.** Some key values to connect on are family, safety, health, and community.
 - EX: *"I hear that family is very important to you. The vaccines are good at protecting you AND your loved ones."*
- **Help your friends and family find their own reason to get vaccinated:** The reasons that someone may choose to get vaccinated will always be those that are most compelling to them personally. Do not tell them what to do or think, guide them instead to choose the vaccine.



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Ending the Conversation

Here are some steps you can take to end the conversation with your friend or family member.

- Offer to help make an appointment
- Offer a ride if possible
- Share info about nearby vaccination sites
- Offer to get back to them if they want to create a list of concerns that require follow up
- Plan to check in a few weeks about vaccine concerns



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Have Realistic Expectations

- **Your conversations may lead to a range in outcomes.** Have realistic expectations for yourself, and don't get discouraged if your family and friends don't quickly decide to get vaccinated.
- **Sometimes the conversation may escalate** and become unproductive. It's ok to respectfully wrap up, and you can offer to talk more another time.
- **We are meeting people where they're at**, so be aware that not everyone will shift from uncertainty to ready to get a vaccine in a single sitting. It may take several conversations over the course of weeks.

Resources

Watch **a short video training** that goes over the TEO method and the best practices for having vaccine conversations.

Review our **TEO one pager** for a concise and distributable summary of the TEO method

Visit our **TEO E-learning Course** for an interactive self paced course on having impactful COVID-19 vaccine conversations.

Visit **madetosave.org/impact** to view the final report on our impact over the duration of our campaign.

Visit **MadetoSave.org** to view our archive of resources and best practices for COVID-19 vaccine outreach in various communities.

