



Homeless Advocates' Guide to Discussing COVID-19 Vaccination with People Experiencing Homelessness

www.tpch.net/vaccine-toolkit

About the Guide

This Discussion Guide is part of the [COVID-19: Promoting Vaccine Confidence Among People Experiencing Homelessness Toolkit](#) for homeless advocates and service providers developed by the [Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness](#). It is modeled after counseling guides developed for outreach workers to address vaccine hesitancy during outbreaks of Hepatitis A by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It was developed to help homeless services staff, volunteers, peer ambassadors, and other trusted homeless advocates respond to concerns or fears expressed by people experiencing homelessness who may be hesitant about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccine hesitancy research consistently indicates that conversations with someone you trust based on honest, accurate information can play a significant role in increasing vaccine confidence and uptake. Homeless advocates - those who have already built trusting and proven relationships with people experiencing homelessness - are uniquely positioned to help their unhoused neighbors explore their vaccine concerns, interrogate their underlying beliefs about COVID-19 vaccination, learn the facts, and make informed decisions about their health.

The discussion points outlined here offer a general guide for homeless advocates to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine with people experiencing homelessness. They are based on health professionals' guidance about effective vaccine messaging and lessons learned from the field and shared by street outreach workers, shelter providers, and community health specialists working with people experiencing homelessness. These messages can and should be tailored to fit your specific situation, relationship, and personal experience with COVID-19 illness and vaccination.

Who Can Help People Experiencing Homelessness Build Vaccine Confidence?

- Street outreach workers
- Day center and drop-in center staff and volunteers
- Emergency shelter staff and volunteers
- Housing case managers and resource navigators
- Housing navigators
- Meal program staff and volunteers
- Family members and friends
- Community health workers and healthcare providers
- Librarians
- **YOU!**

Discussing COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Core Values

- People experiencing homelessness have the right to accurate health information in language they can understand.
- Vaccine hesitancy is common among people, regardless of their housing status, and should not be pathologized or trivialized.
- Trauma histories may influence receptiveness to healthcare (including vaccines) and deserve validation.
- People experiencing homelessness are able to make informed decisions about their bodies and healthcare.
- Harm reduction strategies can help people who choose not to be vaccinated lower risk to themselves and others.
- Vaccines should not be required to access services or used to prevent someone from obtaining housing or other assistance.

Tips for Talking to People Experiencing Homelessness about the COVID-19 Vaccine

The following recommendations from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's ["COVID-19 Vaccination Conversation Tips for Homeless Service Providers"](#) can help you prepare for conversations about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Start from a Place of Empathy

- Emotions are high as we navigate the realities of protecting our nation from continued COVID-19 outbreaks.
- Acknowledge the stressful nature of the pandemic.
- Acknowledge the history of distrust with the medical establishment by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Provide Truthful Education and Information

- Discuss how widespread vaccination will end the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Currently, three COVID-19 vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson/Janssen) have been authorized for use under an Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
 - COVID-19 vaccines seem to have appeared quickly in terms of finding a vaccine, and that is good news.
 - These vaccines have gone through rigorous clinical trials at an accelerated scale to ensure they meet safety standards.
 - The vaccine development process included voluntary participation of BIPOC medical professionals and clinical trial participants.
 - The vaccines have been authorized for distribution in the United States and no major safety concerns have been reported.
 - There can be minor side effects such as headache, fever, muscle aches and fatigue that should resolve a day or two after vaccination. Rely
- There are limits to the amount of vaccine being manufactured, so the vaccine may not yet be available for everyone. Continue to follow public health guidelines about proper use of masks, social distancing, and hand washing to avoid illness before and after vaccination.
- Program leaders are a trusted resource for people who may be confused or unsure about COVID-19 vaccination. Being a caring and empathetic source of information is crucial to vaccine education and protecting the health of your clients and team.

Listen Attentively

- Encourage questions to maintain credibility. Reassure your audience that you want to help answer their questions so they can feel confident about getting vaccinated. If you do not know the answer to their question, assure them that you will get them the information, tell them when to expect it from you, and follow through.
- Offer to schedule an appointment for the person with whom you are engaging if they are interested.

Understanding Vaccine Hesitancy

There are many reasons that an individual may be hesitant to get the COVID-19 vaccine. This Discussion Guide is organized around several known themes of vaccine hesitancy expressed by people experiencing homelessness and the general population. It is important to understand that vaccine hesitancy is common, experienced by people regardless of their housing status, and should not be pathologized as “crazy talk” or trivialized as “conspiracy theories.”

Vaccine hesitancy can stem from past traumas with medical/health services, past negative experience with an adverse effect or side effect from a vaccine or other medication, lack of accurate information available in language that is understandable, and/or widespread misinformation campaigns in popular and social media. By listening openly to the concerns expressed by people experiencing homelessness, responding with accurate information, and sharing relatable personal experiences about COVID-19 illness and the vaccine, homeless advocates can help people experiencing homelessness explore their underlying beliefs about COVID-19 and the vaccine, and help them make informed decisions about their health.

Vaccine Hesitancy Themes Explored in Discussion Guide

- Misinformation and Lack of Basic Knowledge
- Perception of Risk
- Vaccine Safety / Mistrust
- Medical Concerns and Histories
- Symptoms and Perception of Severity
- Racial Trauma and Health Inequity
- Religious and Spiritual Concerns

Rely on Health Professionals to Provide Medical Advice

Homeless advocates can play an important role in helping people experiencing homelessness build confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine by sharing honest, accurate information about vaccine options and our personal experiences with COVID-19 and vaccination. While we can help build vaccine confidence, we need to know our own limitations. Speak from personal experience and be honest if you do not know how to answer a question or address a specific concern.

Never give medical advice unless you are a medical professional. Your local Health Department, [Healthcare for the Homeless](#) program, and federally qualified health centers (FQHC) are great resources for people experiencing homelessness in need of medical advice or services.

Racial Trauma and Vaccine Hesitancy

Examples of medical experimentation and abuse of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) can be found throughout American history. They range from the Tuskegee syphilis experiments conducted on unknowing Black men to the involuntary sterilization of Native American women and, more recently, lead paint studies that caused unjust harm to Black and Brown children. After these and other collective experiences of racial trauma, trust in medical systems has broken for many BIPOC communities.

Current discussions of racial trauma and medical mistrust too often stop there, reducing racial trauma to a collection of historical experiences. The truth is that racial trauma is inflicted on BIPOC communities every day in very direct and tangible ways. The influence of white dominant culture overwhelmingly centers the health concerns and needs of white people and systemic racism disenfranchises BIPOC communities from accessible and affirming healthcare resulting in health disparities like those observed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Misinformation about COVID-19 and available vaccines is available in every language and circulates social media; however, readily accessible and accurate health information that centers the health experiences and concerns of BIPOC communities remains scarce. And while equity-focused vaccine distribution and communication strategies are being developed and implemented across the nation, it is only reasonable that this sudden focus on racial equity in vaccine distribution may lead to skepticism, especially if those efforts are led by the same systems and institutions that have inflicted harm in the past.

An equity-focused approach requires us all to acknowledge the very real harm that BIPOC communities have experienced, to affirm and validate those experiences and resulting mistrust, and to act with cultural humility when addressing vaccine hesitancy resulting from racial trauma and as we work to build more trustworthy systems of health, housing, and social services.

Centering the voices of trusted BIPOC community leaders in vaccine messaging and creating opportunities for BIPOC experiencing homelessness to discuss their vaccine concerns with people who share common racial, ethnic, linguistic, and/or spiritual ties are especially effective strategies to helping them address vaccine hesitancy within the framework of their own lived experience.

Honoring “No” and Harm Reduction

The goal of this guide is not to force people experiencing homelessness, or anyone, to take the COVID-19 vaccine. While it is our hope that this guide helps homeless advocates dispel myths and build vaccine confidence, it is critical that we, as homeless advocates, honor the self-direction of people experiencing homelessness and their right to make their own health decisions. If someone does not want to talk or chooses not to get the vaccine the first time it is offered, do not despair. Take a moment to think about the time you probably spent weighing your options, talking with family or friends, and doing your research before you decided whether to get the vaccine. Do people experiencing homelessness deserve any less?

The decision to get vaccinated requires us all to take a step of faith during an uncertain and unfamiliar time in which misinformation abounds. This is just as true for people experiencing homelessness, especially those whose experiences of racial and/or medical trauma have eroded confidence in the systems around them.

When someone indicates that they do not want to discuss or get the COVID-19 vaccine today, keep the door open for continued conversation. Ask for permission to check in with them again after they have had a few days to think about it. And let them know that you are able to help if they want to talk or learn more about the vaccine.

Our job is not to make decisions for people experiencing homelessness. It is to help them make the most informed decision they can for themselves. This means respecting their decision to say no when they choose.

Vaccination status or decisions should never be required, nor should they be used to prevent someone from accessing services or housing and no one should be made to feel guilty because of their health decisions. People who choose not to get the vaccine can still reduce the risk of illness to themselves and to others by continuing to follow CDC recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Practice Harm Reduction Strategies to Reduce Risk to Yourself and Others Even if You Don't Get the COVID-19 Vaccine

- Wear a mask that covers your mouth and nose.
- Avoid close contact – stay 6 feet apart from other people.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you do not have soap/water.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.



Discussing the Vaccine

The tables below offer possible responses for homeless advocates discussing vaccine options with people who may be hesitant to get the COVID-19 vaccine. As previously mentioned, these talking points are merely a guide. Your discussion should be personalized to your situation, relationship to the person with whom you are discussing vaccination, and your experience with COVID-19 illness and vaccines.

Throughout this guide you will find encouragement to share relatable personal experiences and stories. Research shows that these “real talk” conversations are effective in building vaccine confidence. As you choose what to share, it is important to be mindful of the potential impacts on the person with whom you are talking and to avoid sharing details that may be traumatizing for the listener. Likewise, be mindful not to use your personal experiences to pressure or guilt anyone into being vaccinated.

Remember, it is not our job as homeless advocates to coerce people experiencing homelessness, or anyone, into taking a vaccine. Our job is to prove honest information in a way that allows people experiencing homelessness make informed choices about their health.

Basic Knowledge and Misinformation	
<u>Learn the basics about COVID-19 vaccines.</u>	
Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
I didn't know that there was a vaccine for COVID-19.	→ There are currently three vaccines that have been authorized to protect you against COVID-19. They're safe and effective. Our community is prioritizing people who are at higher risk for the vaccine and that includes people who are sleeping outside or staying in shelters. Would you like to get the vaccine?
I'm not old enough to get the vaccine. Aren't they only giving it to older adults and the police?	→ You're right – older people and first responders were some of the first people who were able to get vaccinated. But our community is prioritizing other people too – and that includes people who are sleeping outside or staying in shelters. You are eligible to get the vaccine now and it will protect you from getting sick. What do you say? → There are lots of things that can put people at risk – and we want you to stay safe. That's why the vaccine is already available for people who are sleeping outside or staying in shelters. I even got it already because I want to keep us both safe. I'd love to help you get yours too.
I don't know what the vaccine does.	→ The vaccine works to protect you from catching the virus that causes COVID-19. It's safe and effective, especially at preventing serious illness – the kind that could put you in the hospital or even kill you.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ I wasn't sure how the vaccine worked either but I did some reading and talked to my doctor/nurse. I learned that these types of vaccines have been studied for decades and they are perfectly safe. After I took it my arm was a little sore and I had a small headache – nothing that a Tylenol couldn't help – and now I feel a ton better knowing that I won't get sick or put someone else at risk.
I can't afford it/don't have health insurance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ The vaccine is free and you don't have to have health insurance. The government made sure it was free so that everyone can get it. COVID-19 has taken its toll on all of us and we want to get back to living life without so much fear. That's why I got/am getting vaccinated and it's why I hope you will too. Want to make an appointment?

Perception of Risk

Learn about COVID-19 risk.

Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
I'm healthy. I don't need to be vaccinated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ COVID-19 can affect anyone. Even healthy people can get very sick from the virus. Getting the vaccine can keep you healthy, though. What do you say? ➡ And I want you to stay that way. The vaccine can keep you from getting sick. ➡ When you get the vaccine, you aren't just protecting yourself. You're also protecting the people around you. Do you know some people who aren't as healthy as you are? By getting the vaccine, you can help protect them too. ➡ If you have had COVID-19 or someone you know has, share a personal story about the illness and why it's important to get vaccinated, even if you are healthy.
I wear my mask all the time and I camp by myself. I don't need the vaccine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ COVID-19 is very easy to spread. Even when we take all the right precautions, we might get it. The vaccine is one more layer of defense to help keep you safe. ➡ There is no foolproof way to protect ourselves from a virus. Our best bet is to have a couple layers of protection. Think of it like a slice of Swiss cheese. Each piece has some holes in it. But if you put a couple slices together, the holes are covered up. That's what we're trying

	<p>to do with masks, social distancing, and the vaccine. When we use all of these options together, we're the most likely to stay safe and healthy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ If you have had COVID-19 or someone you know has, share a personal story about contracting the virus despite following the recommended precautions and trying to stay safe.
I already had COVID-19. I'm cured/have natural immunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ I'm sorry you had it – what was that like? If the person says it wasn't a big deal, say something like "Wow, it sounds like you were lucky," or if they say that it was bad, say something like, "That sounds hard, I'm sure you don't want to go through that again." Explain that scientists don't know yet how long natural immunity lasts and, while it is rare, some people have been re-infected. ➡ COVID-19 is a virus and there is no cure. You might have what doctors refer to as natural or acquired immunity. This means your body made antibodies to fight COVID-19 but we don't know yet how long those antibodies last or how well they fight against infection later. It's sort of like chicken pox – you can have it as a child but then you might get it again as shingles when you're older. Right now, the vaccine is the best way we know to keep you healthy.
I never get the flu vaccine but I stay healthy. I don't need vaccines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Even though the symptoms can be similar, COVID-19 and the flu are very different. More than half a million people have died in the US from COVID-19. I want to help you stay healthy and the vaccine is a great way to do that. ➡ Why don't you get the flu vaccine? Use this as an opportunity to discuss other underlying beliefs about vaccines that may be influencing the person's receptiveness to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Concerns About Vaccine Safety / Mistrust

Learn about COVID-19 vaccine [safety](#) and [effectiveness](#).

Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
The vaccine was rushed. It isn't safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ The technology used to develop the new COVID-19 vaccines isn't new. In fact, it's been studied for decades.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Each of the vaccines went through rigorous clinical trials with tens of thousands of people studied, and the results were all reviewed by multiple independent advisory panels before they were reviewed. ▶ Millions of Americans have already been vaccinated across the country and right here in our town. ▶ If you have been vaccinated or plan to be, share your personal reasons for vaccine confidence.
I heard the vaccine has a microchip in it to track me or I heard that it's connected to 5G and it's part of a government plan to control or track me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There are a lot of untrue stories about the vaccine out there. The vaccine does not have a microchip or any other kind of device. It's actually impossible to put a microchip in a vaccine. ▶ The pandemic has been hard for all of us and it's easy to be afraid. This vaccine actually went through a rigorous process that involved the drug manufacturers, government, and independent councils. There have been thousands of people involved in getting the vaccine to us. I'm sure that someone would have spoken out if it was part of a government plot. ▶ Thousands of doctors and medical professionals agree that the vaccine is safe, just like other vaccines we get for the flu or measles. ▶ If you have had skepticism about the vaccine, share your personal experience and the reasons you now believe that the vaccine is safe. ▶ Explain how you learned the facts about the COVID-19 vaccines and offer to show the person information from the CDC or other reliable sources that refute false claims.
Why am I getting the <fill in the blank> vaccine? Are they trying to give us the crappy stuff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Each of the vaccines are safe and effective, especially when it comes to preventing serious illness that leads to hospital stays or death. ▶ Vaccine supply is still very limited and almost no one has been able to choose which vaccine they receive. The best vaccine is the vaccine we can get right now. ▶ Even though the vaccine supply is limited and there isn't a choice about which vaccine to get yet, you are being prioritized because we know that people sleeping outside or in shelters face

	<p>higher risks to getting COVID-19 and experiencing serious illness. We want you to be safe and healthy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ If your community is prioritizing single dose Johnson & Johnson vaccines for people experiencing homelessness, explain that they are making this vaccine available so that you don't have to make a second appointment. It's easy to forget or miss an appointment and we want everyone to be fully vaccinated. ➡ If your community has multiple options, explain the options to access various vaccines and offer to help the person get the vaccine they prefer.
I don't want to be a guinea pig. They're just giving it to us so they can see what's wrong with it before they give it to everyone else.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ The vaccines have all gone through rigorous testing and are proven to be safe and effective. Tens of thousands of people participated in the clinical trials that determined the vaccines were safe. ➡ Millions of people have already taken the vaccine including health workers, older adults, and other people who are at higher risk of getting sick. I don't think that doctors and nurses would have taken the vaccines first if they weren't convinced that they were safe. ➡ You are able to get the vaccine sooner than most people because your life and health matters. We know that people sleeping outside or in shelters can be at higher risk of getting sick and everyone wants you to be safe and healthy.
I know someone who got the vaccine and they got really sick.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ We all respond to the vaccine differently but most people only have mild symptoms like some soreness in their arm or a fever/headache that usually goes away in day or two. Tylenol is usually all someone needs to feel ok after the vaccine. ➡ Some people do have more severe symptoms – and it seems like that's what people are talking about a lot. But the reality is that most people have very mild side effects and the benefits make it all worth it. Getting the vaccine gets us all one step closer to getting back to normal and we can feel better knowing that we are keeping ourselves and our community safe. ➡ If you've been vaccinated, share your personal experience with the vaccine. Focus on the benefits of the vaccine (i.e., feeling safer knowing that you won't get yourself or your family sick, etc.)

I heard you can get COVID-19 from taking the vaccine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ The COVID-19 vaccine doesn't include a live virus and you can't get COVID-19 from the vaccine. ➡ Millions of people have been vaccinated and there are no known cases of someone getting COVID-19 from the vaccine.
I heard that vaccines cause autism (or other blanket statements about vaccines causing illness).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ There have been a number of studies. Medical experts have determined that vaccines do not cause autism. This is a myth that was first told about the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine – and it's been disproven. ➡ The COVID-19 vaccines have all been rigorously studied and are safe. There has been no indication that the COVID-19 vaccine causes autism or any other illnesses.
The vaccine will change my DNA.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ The COVID-19 vaccines do not affect your DNA. A lot of people have been confused about some of the vaccines and the difference between DNA and messenger RNA. Messenger RNA (mRNA) is used in some of the vaccines to help your body create antibodies against COVID-19. None of the vaccines can alter your DNA in any way. ➡ There are a lot of untrue stories about the vaccine out there. The vaccine does not have DNA in it and cannot change your DNA in any way. ➡ If you have had skepticism about the vaccine, share your personal experience and the reasons you now believe that the vaccine is safe. ➡ Explain how you learned the facts about the COVID-19 vaccines and offer to show the person information from the CDC or other reliable sources that refute false claims.

Medical Concerns & Histories

Learn about COVID-19 vaccine safety and effectiveness.

Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
I got a vaccine for something else and I got really sick. I'm allergic to vaccines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Every vaccine is different. You might react badly to one vaccine but just fine to others. It's a good idea to talk to a doctor or nurse you trust to find out if the vaccine is safe for you. Is there someone we can call?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Most people only experience some soreness in their arm or mild symptoms like a fever or headache after the COVID-19 vaccine and these usually pass within a day or two. Some people do have more severe reactions though. Could we call a doctor or nurse you trust to talk about your experience with vaccines and find out if the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for you.
I'm sick this week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should get tested. I can help you schedule a test right now if you'd like. Since the symptoms look a lot like the flu and other common illnesses, it's good to check and know for sure. As long as you don't have COVID-19, you can get the vaccine once your symptoms go away. ➡ If your symptoms aren't like COVID-19, it's still a good idea to wait until you feel better to get the vaccine. In the meantime, you can take other precautions like continuing to wear your mask whenever you're around other people, keeping a safe distance, and washing your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer often. ➡ I'm sorry to hear that. How are you feeling? Any major symptoms? Do you want to see a doctor to get it checked out? I can help you make an appointment.
I'm pregnant/breastfeeding or I'm trying to get pregnant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ There isn't a lot of research yet but doctors and medical experts believe that the vaccine is safe for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, and/or trying to get pregnant. Plenty of people who are pregnant/breastfeeding have gotten the vaccine safely. Still, it's a personal choice and I understand your fear. If you aren't sure whether to get the vaccine while you're pregnant/breastfeeding, maybe we could talk to a doctor or nurse you trust and see what they recommend? ➡ All the more reason to think about getting the vaccine. People who are pregnant are at a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Doctors also think that people who are pregnant and have COVID-19 might be at higher risk for other complications like pre-term birth. I know it's a hard decision to make – would you feel better if you talked to a doctor or nurse you trust and see what they recommend?
I'm on hormone replacement therapy (HRT).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ It's ok to get the vaccine while you're on hormone replacement therapy. Doctors haven't seen any adverse reactions between the vaccine and HRT meds but it never hurts to check with your own doctor. Have you talked to the doctor who helps you with your HRT meds to see what they recommend? I can help you call if you'd like.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ If you're taking hormones that weren't prescribed, it's probably a good idea to call a doctor or nurse you trust and talk about the vaccine. We can even call the health department and ask some questions without sharing too much information about yourself if you're worried about getting in trouble.
I'm taking medication for HIV/AIDS (HAART) or I'm on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Medical experts agree that there is no reason that someone with HIV/AIDS should avoid the vaccine, regardless of whether they are taking HAART. The vaccines don't contain a live virus and is safe for people living with HIV/AIDS. ➡ The COVID-19 vaccines do not cause COVID-19, even in people with weakened immune systems. HIV doctors agree that the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and recommended for people living with HIV/AIDS. ➡ Medical experts agree that there is no reason that someone who is taking PrEP should avoid the COVID-19 vaccine. Just like PrEP helps you lower your risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, the COVID-19 vaccine can help lower your risk of contracting COVID-19 or becoming sick.
I have hepatitis/chronic liver disease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ There hasn't been a lot of research about liver disease and the COVID-19 vaccine but medical experts and doctors don't believe there is any reason someone with chronic liver disease or hepatitis shouldn't get the vaccine. If you are immune-suppressed, the vaccine may not be as effective as it is for other people but it will still offer you at least some protection – and that's important. Is there a doctor or nurse your trust that we could call to see what they recommend for you? ➡ All the more reason to think about getting the vaccine. People with liver disease can be at higher risk for getting sick from COVID-19, especially if your immune system is suppressed. I know it's a hard decision to make – would you feel better if you talked to a doctor or nurse you trust and see what they recommend?
I'm taking medication for heart disease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Doctors agree that people with heart disease should get the vaccine as soon as they can. Unfortunately, heart disease can put you at higher risk for getting sick if you contract COVID-19. You have to be careful about taking over the counter pain reliever after your vaccine, though. Let's call your doctor or nurse to see what they recommend.

	<p>➡ The American Heart Association put out a statement in January encouraging everyone to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as they can. Heart disease puts you at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and we all want you to be safe and healthy. Is there a doctor or nurse who knows about your condition that we could call for advice?</p>
I'm allergic to eggs. I can't take the vaccine.	<p>➡ There are no egg products in any of the three COVID-19 vaccines. If you want to take a look at the vaccine ingredients, we can look at them together online (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines.html).</p>
I have another condition not listed here.	<p>➡ Most people can get the COVID-19 vaccine safely. We all want to protect our health and be as safe as we can though. Why don't we call a doctor or nurse you trust and see what they can tell us about safe options with your condition?</p>
I hate doctors.	<p>➡ The vaccine process is actually really fast and easy. Most people say you can barely feel it when you get the shot. The hardest part is usually scheduling or waiting in line. Once you see person giving you the vaccine, it's usually over in a couple of minutes. I can go with you if you like.</p> <p>➡ I hear you – I don't think anyone really likes going to the doctor. But here's the thing –most of the time, you're getting your vaccine from a nurse or a first responder, and it isn't even at the doctor's office. It still can be scary, though. I keep telling myself a few minutes now is better than possibly getting sick and having to spend time in the hospital later. Would it be easier for you if I came along? It's nice to have some moral support sometimes and I'd love to celebrate with you after you get your vaccine.</p> <p>➡ Share a personal experience about your own discomfort in healthcare settings (doctors, hospitals, dentists) and why you still think the vaccine is worth it. Highlight the benefits of getting the vaccine and its advantages over a hospital stay.</p>
I'm afraid of needles.	<p>➡ I'm sorry – a lot of people feel that way. This vaccine can prevent you from getting sick and spreading the virus to others. One quick stick can save your life and protect your family, friends, and community.</p> <p>➡ The vaccine keeps you safe from COVID-19 so that you don't get sick and have to spend days or weeks in a hospital.</p>

	<p>➡ What if I came with you and we let the person giving you the vaccine know that you are afraid of needles. We can distract you while they give you the shot. Most people say they barely feel it and that it is even easier than the flu vaccine.</p>
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Symptoms and Perception of Severity

Familiarize yourself with the symptoms of COVID-19 and the risk of severe illness.

Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
I don't have any symptoms.	<p>➡ Let's keep it that way! The vaccine can prevent you from getting sick and getting symptoms. Getting COVID-19 can make you sick for weeks and even months. If you have a bad case, you could end up in the hospital or die.</p> <p>➡ The vaccine isn't used to treat COVID-19. It helps prevent it so you don't have to get sick. The vaccine is safe and effective so why risk it?</p>
COVID-19 isn't that serious.	<p>➡ Millions of people have died from COVID-19 across the world. Right here in our town, ### people have died from the illness. The vaccines are safe and effective – they help protect you from COVID-19 and are almost 100% effective in preventing serious illness or death. Why take the risk?</p> <p>➡ COVID-19 can make you very sick. It can even kill you, especially if you have underlying medical conditions. Sure, a lot of people recover but they usually describe the illness as being incredibly painful and frightening. Some say it feels like your lungs are filled with broken glass – that sounds awful. I don't want to experience that – that's why I got/am getting the vaccine and it's why I hope you will too.</p> <p>➡ Share a personal experience about yourself or someone you know who has gotten sick with COVID-19. Explain that you don't want anyone else to have to go through this and that's why you are encouraging people to take the vaccine.</p>
I've got a strong immune system. I can fight it off myself.	<p>➡ Even people with strong immune systems can get very sick from COVID-19. A strong immune system isn't always enough to protect you – but the vaccine is. Why take the risk?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Even if your body can fight off COVID-19 without you getting very sick, you could still make other people sick while you have it. COVID-19 is very contagious and it's easy to spread through everyday contact. What if you accidentally spread it to someone who wasn't as healthy? You don't want to make someone else sick. That's why we want everyone to get vaccinated. It doesn't just protect us, it protects everyone around us too. ➡ Share a personal experience about yourself or someone you know who was healthy but got sick with COVID-19 and why vaccines are important to stay healthy and prevent the spread. ➡ Share a personal story about someone in your life, or in the life of the person with whom you are talking, who is at higher risk and how getting the vaccine helps to protect them too.
I don't care if I get sick.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ I care if you get sick, and I know other people do too. Let's talk about some of the people who matter to you. How would they feel if you got sick? How would you feel if someone you care about got sick? ➡ No one wants to go through the pain of losing someone we care about or worrying about them getting sick. The vaccine can provide some assurance that you won't get sick or die from COVID-19.

Racial Trauma

Familiarize yourself with these and other resources about vaccination in BIPOC and non-citizen communities.

- [The Conversation: Between Us, About Us](#)
- [National Hispanic Medical Association – Increasing Vaccines in Latino Communities](#)
- [Department of Homeland Security Statement on Equal Access to Vaccines and Vaccine Distribution Sites](#)

Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
I don't trust the doctors/health system. They've abused us before.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ I know, over the years a lot of terrible things have been done to people of color in the name of science. It's a personal decision and I respect whatever you choose. Whose opinion do you trust the most about this kind of a thing? Maybe we could see what they say? ➡ Did you know that doctors and medical experts of all races are encouraging people to take the COVID-19 vaccine? The vaccine trials included people from most races and are safe and effective for anyone. Is there anything that would help you feel safe about getting the vaccine?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ We've definitely gotten it wrong before and we aren't doing it perfectly this time either. I don't want you to miss out on protecting yourself from COVID-19 without exploring all your options, though. What kind of information would help you make your decision? ➡ If you share a racial/ethnic identity with the person with whom you are talking, share your personal experience and why you decided to get the vaccine.
I'm not a citizen – I can't get the vaccine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ The vaccine is free for everyone regardless of your citizenship status. ➡ You don't have to share your immigration status with anyone to get the vaccine. It's perfectly legal for everyone to get it. ➡ The federal government is worried that folks who aren't citizens may be afraid to get the vaccine. That's why immigration officials aren't allowed to conduct enforcement activities at or near vaccine sites. It's probably hard to trust that – but it's the same rules that they have followed for a long time at hospitals and doctors' offices. ➡ I understand why you might be worried and I respect whatever you decide. Maybe we could call the consulate or an organization you trust to see what they think?
The research was all about white people. How do I know it's safe?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➡ Each of the vaccine trials included a diverse group of people from different races. We can look up some information about the race/ethnicity of people who participated in the trials if you would like. ➡ Millions of people have taken the vaccine, including hundreds of thousands of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The vaccines have all proven that they are safe and effective regardless of your race or ethnicity.

Religious or Spiritual Concerns

Familiarize yourself with various faith communities' beliefs about vaccines.

Statement or Belief	Potential Responses
My religion prohibits vaccines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➡ I didn't know that. Faith is important to a lot of us and I understand why that might influence your decision about getting the vaccine. Have you spoken to your pastor/imam/rabbi/spiritual advisor? I know a lot of religious groups are encouraging people to take the vaccine, even some of the groups who don't usually.➡ I understand. How are people in your faith keeping themselves safe and healthy? Can I share some information so that you can reduce your COVID-19 risk, even if you don't get the vaccine?

Which vaccine is the best vaccine for me? The vaccine I can get right now!



Getting vaccinated
can help prevent
getting sick with
COVID-19



People who have
already gotten sick
with COVID-19 may
still benefit from
getting vaccinated



COVID-19 vaccines
cannot give you
COVID-19



COVID-19 vaccines
will not cause you
to test positive on
COVID-19 viral
tests*