

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health



The Ferry Street Health & Wellness Project

RESOURCE GUIDE

COMMUNITY COVID & FLU CHAMPIONS:

Having Conversations with
Pregnant, Postpartum &
Breastfeeding Women

Developed by  CAI

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To access all our REACH Community
Vaccine Champion Resources, scan this





Note to the Facilitators

This guide is designed for Doulas and Community Health Workers to strengthen important facilitation skills, communication skills, and to provide resources to encourage open, honest, authentic, and engaging conversations about COVID-19 and Influenza (flu) vaccinations.

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The Ferry Street Health & Wellness Project



Introduction

Doulas and Community Health Workers can play a role in facilitating real and authentic conversations regarding COVID-19 and/or flu vaccinations with clients. The way these conversations are approached is extremely important. The goal of these conversations is to help vaccine hesitant individuals sort through any mixed feelings they may have and make an informed decision that is best for them.

The focus of this guide is to help outline skills essential to having open and engaging conversations with clients about receiving vaccinations. Your role is not to push facts, statistics, or any specific agenda. You are not expected to convince someone to get vaccinated, but to provide accurate, up-to-date information on vaccines to those who are interested. You are a trusted source of information for your clients.

Sharing your own personal experience or reasoning for receiving the vaccine seems to resonate well with others. Sharing a non-biased story from a pregnant, postpartum, or lactating client is another possible way to increase vaccine confidence.

We hope the following skills and information will help you share information, in your own unique way, so that your clients can make an informed decision that is best for them.



Critical Communication Skills

When a client is hesitant about getting vaccinated, drawing out their concerns, without judgment, is key to helping the conversation move forward. It's more likely they will trust you if you understand their fears, respect their perspective, and feel you are genuinely concerned about their health and well-being.

When speaking with clients regarding vaccines, use language that shows you support their thoughts and concerns. When our conversations encourage change, be aware of how the information is being presented.

Using good communication skills like asking open-ended questions, normalization, reflective listening and asking for permission, often helps move the conversation in a forward direction.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions encourage responses that are not limited to yes-or-no answers. These types of questions can help you understand what an individual is worried about, possibly where they have learned any misinformation, and if they have tried to get answers to their questions. Open-ended questions provide you with much more information than closed-ended questions do, and they allow for a conversation rather than an interrogation.

Conversations using open-ended questions can make people feel more at ease rather than putting them on the defensive. They can also help you understand someone's underlying fears and concerns about vaccines and help resolve feelings of uncertainty.

Also, a person's tone has a significant impact on these conversations. Asking open-ended questions, using a non-judgmental tone will help keep someone from feeling defensive to the questions. Open-ended questions typically begin with, who, what, how, or tell me.

Here are some examples of open-ended questions:

- ▣ What do you already know about COVID-19/flu vaccine?
- ▣ Tell me what you've heard about how COVID-19 affects pregnant people?
- ▣ How does your partner feel about the vaccine during your pregnancy?





Normalizing

Normalizing is when you make someone's experience seem like you have heard it before. Normalizing a person's feelings helps them feel validated, heard, and accepted in a non-judgmental manner.

Telling someone they are not the only person who heard, thought, or felt something does not mean that you agree with them—it only continues the conversation so that you can help the person think through their concerns out loud. When you normalize, you are confirming that you have heard the same concern, statement, or opinion before from someone else.

Some examples to normalize a conversation regarding vaccine hesitancy:

- ▣ You are not alone; I've heard the same thing from a lot of people.
- ▣ I have heard many people say they feel the vaccine was rushed for approval.
- ▣ Your concerns are normal, I had them myself and I know other people have them as well.

Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is restating and clarifying the message you feel the other person is sharing to check your understanding and show that you were listening. It is a communication skill which allows you to focus on the message, ideas, and concerns being shared by the other person. It's also important to take notice of a person's body language, facial expressions, and tone, since those can all be important clues to help you best understand what they are really sharing. Reflective listening establishes rapport and demonstrates understanding by reflecting the thoughts and feelings that you've heard and observed.

Some examples of reflective listening:

- ▣ I understand you are concerned about the safety of the vaccines and if they are effective.
- ▣ I heard you say you are worried about possible side effects from getting the vaccination.
- ▣ It sounds like you are concerned that you are at risk of getting COVID-19 if you get vaccinated.



Asking Permission

Whenever we start a conversation, share information, or ask questions of another person, a respectful way to do this is by first asking for permission. In addition, we want to focus on using independent-supportive language as much as possible.

When our conversations encourage change, we need to be aware of how we present information. This can include the tone in our voice, the way we communicate non-verbally, and the signals we pick up from the other person.

All these factors can make a difference in how the information is received, especially our language, since it can often either feel supportive or aggressive to the person you're speaking to.¹

Some examples of asking permission

- ▣ Would it be okay with you if we talked about this a little more?
- ▣ I recently learned about the different types of vaccines available, would you mind if I share them with you?
- ▣ Might I provide you with some information about common symptoms and side effects, if you decide to get vaccinated?
- ▣ What I know about that is a little different, do you mind if I talk about it now?

When you ask permission before providing information you will help the person or group you're speaking with feel:

- ▣ Like they are in control of the information they receive.
- ▣ More respected, valued, and that their time is important.
- ▣ Recognition they are the authority in their own lives, and you are not.
- ▣ They have their own needs, wants, concerns, fears, hopes, wishes, and desires.



Explore-Offer-Explore

A technique that can be used to help share information in a respectful way. Using these steps can help you quickly determine what is important to your client, and what their concerns are, so that you can provide information in a way that is most helpful. You may use these steps multiple times within one conversation.

Explore

In this first step, explore, we want to find out what a client already knows about vaccines so we can tailor the information to be most relevant. Start by ask an open-ended question to find out what your client already knows or would like to know regarding the topic of vaccines.

Here are some examples:

- ▣ “What have you heard about vaccines during pregnancy?”
- ▣ “What would you like to know about the flu/COVID-19 vaccine?”
- ▣ “Tell me your thoughts on getting vaccinated during your pregnancy.”
- ▣ “Would you mind telling me what you already know about the flu/COVID-19 vaccine?”

Offer

In this second step, offer, is where you can normalize your client’s feelings, ask permission to share information, and then share information, if permission is given.

Here are some examples:

- ▣ Normalize – “Many people are worried about vaccine safety.”
- ▣ Ask permission to share information – “Would it be okay with you if we talked about this a little more?”
- ▣ Share information – “Antibodies from vaccinations pass into human milk providing protection from COVID-19 to babies who receive it.”

Explore

In this third step, the second explore is where you ask another open-ended question to check in with your client and invite feedback to find out what they think about the information you shared.

Here are some examples:

- ▣ “Tell me your thoughts about what I just shared with you.”
- ▣ “Tell me what this all means to you.”



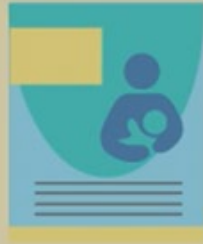
Educational Messaging

COVID-19 & Flu Educational Messaging

Below are some educational messages from medical experts that can be used to weave into a conversation in response to common concerns voiced from your clients.

- ✓ Medical experts strongly recommend pregnant, recently pregnant, and lactating individuals get vaccinated against COVID-19 and the flu.^{2,3,4}
- ✓ COVID-19 and flu vaccines are safe during pregnancy and keep both you and your baby protected from illness and serious complications.⁵
- ✓ Getting COVID-19 or the flu during pregnancy increases your risk of pregnancy complications, such as having a premature baby.⁶
- ✓ When you get vaccinated during pregnancy, your body creates antibodies that pass to your baby, so that after they're born, they're protected from illness while they are still too little to be vaccinated.⁷
- ✓ Antibodies from vaccinations pass into human milk providing protection from COVID-19 and the flu to babies who receive it.
- ✓ Doctor permission is not required to get a COVID or flu vaccination.⁸

To view the Vyond video again as a reminder of how to incorporate asking open-ended questions, asking permission to share information, reflective listening and normalization, scan the QR code with your smart phone.



Script Writing and Practice

The following is the transcription of the Vyond video that was presented during the Community Vaccine Champion training for your reference.

Sherisa:

So, Marie, we've been talking for a while now about what you hope to experience in the hospital and how your appointments have been going with your OB. Was there anything else you'd like to talk about before we plan the next time we'll meet?

Marie:

I don't think so — oh wait, yes there is. Every time I go to their office, my OB asks me if I've been vaccinated yet for COVID and the flu. It's so annoying. I feel like I'm being judged because I'm unvaccinated. I don't know what to do yet.

Sherisa:

That sounds frustrating. I completely understand, I've been hearing the same thing from so many of my other clients.

Key component: Normalization

Marie:

That's really good to hear. Seriously, like I'm not dealing with enough already. Anyway, I wanted to ask: What do you think I should do?

Sherisa:

Well, you know I always want you to decide what's best for your care and I'm here to give you the information you need to make the choices that sit best with you. Would you mind telling me your thoughts about getting vaccinated?

Key component: Explore

Marie:

No idea. I never got the flu vaccine or anything like that before COVID and now that I'm pregnant, I feel like they want me to get it all. I don't understand why it's so important now. If I get vaccinated, wouldn't it make the baby sick?

Sherisa: You are so thoughtful about how vaccines might affect you and your pregnancy. I'm glad you said that Marie; it's something I hear all the time. A lot of parents are worried that getting vaccinated might make their baby sick. I have some information about vaccination during pregnancy that I can share with you if you'd like.

Key components: Normalization, Asking permission

Marie:

Yes, that would be amazing, please do.

Sherisa:

Of course. First, I want to just say that you don't need to have written permission from a doctor to get vaccinated against the flu or COVID, okay? I want to acknowledge that up front because I know there's been some misinformation going on around about that.

Key component: Sharing information

Marie:

Sure, sure. I understand.

Sherisa:

What I can tell you right now is that when you're pregnant, your immune system is not as strong as normal. That's because, as you know, it takes a lot of your own energy and effort to grow your baby. So, pregnant people are more likely to get sick and to be in worse shape when they do. That means, if you were to get COVID or the flu during your pregnancy, you are at a higher risk than people who aren't pregnant.

Key component: Sharing information

Marie:

Oh, okay, that makes sense.

Sherisa:

Yeah. It's just a natural change in your ability to fight illness that happens and is a very normal part of pregnancy. I think that's why your OB keeps asking you about getting vaccinated against things like the flu or COVID—because they know that right now, you're at more risk. I want to check in with you. How are you feeling about what I've shared so far?

Key components: Explore, Invite feedback

Marie:

Okay. I mean, I can understand that — but doesn't that mean my baby also has less protection? And getting a vaccine could make him sick instead of me?

Sherisa: That is an excellent question, Marie. To help me answer it, would you mind if I we look at this infographic about getting vaccinations during pregnancy? I think it might help answer your questions.

Key component: Asking permission

Marie:

Yes, absolutely. I don't want anything bad to happen to me or my baby.

Sherisa:

I know you don't. We both want you to have a successful and healthy pregnancy and baby. Your questions are right on track, and this is something that all my clients are also thinking about. As you can see, when you get vaccinated during pregnancy, instead of putting the baby at risk, the baby gains more protection from your own antibodies passing to the baby through your body. This means they have more protection when they are born. When babies are too little to get vaccines themselves.

Key components: Normalization, Sharing information

Marie:

Oh okay. So, you're saying the vaccinations are safe?

Sherisa:

What we know right now is that medical experts strongly recommend that pregnant people get vaccinated against COVID-19 and the flu to dramatically reduce the risk of severe symptoms,, having to go to the hospital, and even dying. Once again, this is a lot of information, so I want to check in with you: What do you think about that?

Key component: Sharing information, Explore, Invite feedback

Marie:

Yeah, I appreciate you sharing this information with me. I feel like you're the only person I can trust to give me real support. I'd rather talk with you than to my OB in the first place. It is a lot of information and I need to think about it and talk with my partner.

Sherisa:

Of course. I know it can be hard and confusing to have this conversation with your OB. I encourage you to reach out to her for more information. And, you know I'm always here for you.



Script Writing Practice

Please use the space below to create and practice writing custom open-ended questions, asking permission, reflective listening and normalizing regarding COVID-19/flu vaccinations. Feel free to draw inspiration from the samples provided in this guide, however; we encourage you to use your own words to make the conversation feel natural.

Scenario:

Your client shares with you that they do not plan to get the flu vaccine because they have never received it before, and they don't think they need to get it now.

What kind of open-ended questions might you use in this conversation?

Examples:

- ▣ "What have you heard about the flu vaccine and pregnancy?"
- ▣ "Tell me why not getting vaccinated is important to you."
- ▣ "What have you heard about getting the flu while you're pregnant?"

What normalizing statements might you use in this conversation?

Examples:

- ▣ "You are not alone; I've been talking to a lot of my clients, and it seems like many feel the same way."
- ▣ "I have heard a lot of people are feeling the same way."
- ▣ "That's a pretty common reaction."

What reflective listening statements might you use in this conversation?

Examples:

- ▣ “Getting the flu vaccine would be a new experience for you.”
- ▣ “It sounds like you’re feeling it’s not worth it to get the flu vaccine.”

What kind of asking permission questions might you use in this conversation?

Examples:

- ▣ “Mind if I share some information with you that I have learned about the different vaccines?”
- ▣ “Might I provide you with some information about common symptoms and side effects, if you decide to get vaccinated?”



Resources for Facilitators

Additional Web-based Resources:

- Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>
- COVID-19 Educational Resources
 - <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-educational-resources>
- Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccination
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- DONA Code of Ethics
 - <https://www.dona.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/COESOP-2020-FINAL-Birth.pdf>

Acknowledgements



The Ferry Street Health & Wellness Project

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health

CAI, in partnership with the African American Health Equity Task Force (AAHETF), administers the CDC-funded REACH grant in Buffalo, New York whose goal is to identify, implement, evaluate, and continuously improve a set of strategies to address enduring disparities in rates of chronic disease for Black/African American residents residing in select zip codes in Buffalo. Partnering with Calming Nature Doula Services, and GBUAHN, the REACH initiative received supplemental funds to develop, implement, evaluate, and continuously improve CAI's community centered approach to addressing disparities in chronic disease to increase COVID-19 vaccine availability, accessibility, and confidence among Black and Latinx adults living in Buffalo, with a specific focus on high-risk groups such as the elderly, people with chronic conditions, pregnant women, and young adults.



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Handouts

What to Expect after Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine

The COVID-19 shot may cause side effects in some people. Side effects should go away in a few days.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

On the arm where you got the shot:

- Pain
- Redness
- Swelling

In the rest of your body:

- Fever
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Nausea



Ask the facility healthcare provider (or facility staff) for help if:

- The redness or pain where you got the shot gets worse after 24 hours
- Your side effects are worrying you
- Your side effects do not seem to be going away after a few days

HELPFUL TIPS

If you have pain, headache, or fever, ask a healthcare provider (or facility staff) if you can have medicine.

If you are sore where you got the shot:

- Apply a clean, cool, wet washcloth over the area
- Use or move your arm gently

If you have a fever:

- Drink a lot of water
- Get plenty of rest
- Dress lightly

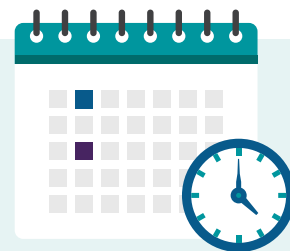


REMEMBER

Side effects may make you feel a little sick or even make it hard to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days.

Increase COVID-19 vaccination rates and ensure that staff and residents stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines may not fully protect you until a week or two after your final shot. It takes time for your body to build protection after any vaccination.



Even after your COVID-19 vaccination, when you are in a correctional facility, it's important to continue wearing a well-fitting mask, try to stay at least 6 feet away from others as much as possible, and wash your hands often.



cdc.gov/coronavirus

CS324160C 02/08/2022

Pregnant? You Need a **Flu Shot!**



Information for pregnant people



Because you are pregnant, CDC and your ob-gyn or midwife recommend you get a flu shot to protect yourself and your baby from flu.

You should get vaccinated by the end of October, if possible. Early vaccination can also be considered for people who are in the third trimester of pregnancy, because this can help protect their infants during the first months of life. Talk to your ob-gyn or midwife about getting a flu shot.

Flu can be a serious illness, especially when you are pregnant.

Getting flu can cause serious problems when you are pregnant. Even if you are generally healthy, changes in immune, heart, and lung functions during pregnancy make you more likely to get severely ill from flu. Pregnant people (and people up to two weeks postpartum) who get flu are at higher risk of developing serious illness, including being hospitalized.

Flu shots are the best available protection for you – and your baby.

When you get your flu shot, your body starts to make antibodies that help protect you against flu. Antibodies are also passed on to your developing baby, and help protect them for several months after birth. This is important because babies younger than 6 months old are too young to get a flu vaccine. If you breastfeed your infant, antibodies also can be passed through breast milk. It takes about two weeks for your body to make antibodies after getting a flu vaccine. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or clinic about getting vaccinated by the end of October.

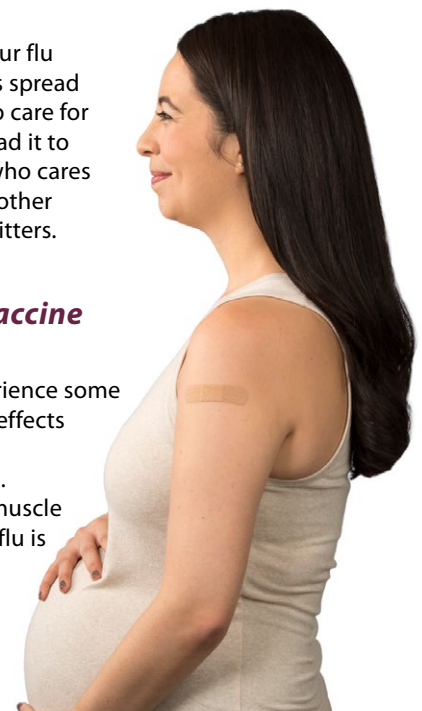
Flu shots are safe for people who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

You can get a flu shot at any time, during any trimester, while you are pregnant. Millions of pregnant people have gotten flu shots. Flu shots have an excellent safety record. There is a lot of evidence that flu vaccines can be given safely during pregnancy, though these data are limited for the first trimester.

If you deliver your baby before getting your flu shot, you should still get vaccinated. Flu is spread from person to person. You, or others who care for your baby, may get sick with flu, and spread it to your baby. It is important that everyone who cares for your baby get a flu vaccine, including other household members, relatives, and babysitters.

Common side effects of a flu vaccine are mild

After getting your flu shot, you may experience some mild side effects. The most common side effects include soreness, tenderness, redness and/or swelling where the shot was given. Sometimes you might have a headache, muscle aches, fever, and nausea or feel tired. The flu is a serious illness, especially when you are pregnant.



If you have flu symptoms, call your doctor immediately.

If you get flu symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, body aches, headache, etc.) – even if you have already had a flu shot – call your doctor, nurse, or clinic right away. Doctors can prescribe influenza antiviral medicine to treat flu. Antiviral drugs can shorten your flu illness, make it milder and lessen the chance of developing serious complications. Because pregnant people are at higher risk of developing serious flu complications, CDC recommends that they be treated quickly with antiviral drugs if they get flu symptoms. Oral oseltamivir is the preferred treatment for pregnant people because it has the most data available to suggest that it is safe and beneficial. These medicines work best when started early.

Fever is often a symptom of flu. Having a fever early in pregnancy increases the chances of having a baby with birth defects or other problems. Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or brand store equivalent) can reduce a fever, but you should still call your doctor or nurse and tell them about your illness.

If you have any of the following signs, call 911 and seek emergency medical care right away:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen
- Persistent dizziness, or confusion, or drowsiness.
- Severe or constant vomiting
- Seizures
- Not urinating
- Severe muscle pain
- Severe weakness or unsteadiness
- Fever or cough that improves, but then returns or worsens
- Decreased or no movement of your baby
- High fever that is not responding to Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or brand store equivalent).

For more information about the flu or the vaccine, call: **1-800-CDC-INFO** or visit: www.cdc.gov/flu/



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Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine while I'm pregnant?

Pregnant women have a higher risk of more severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) than nonpregnant women. Getting vaccinated may protect you from severe illness. Vaccination also may help protect your fetus.

ACOG recommends that all pregnant women be vaccinated against COVID-19. If you are pregnant and want to know more about the vaccines, talk with your obstetrician–gynecologist (ob-gyn). This conversation is not required to get a vaccine, but it may be helpful.

Risks of COVID-19 infection

It's important to talk about your risk of getting COVID-19 and how the infection can affect your pregnancy. People who work in certain jobs, such as health care, may be at higher risk of getting COVID-19. Certain health conditions, such as diabetes mellitus or high blood pressure, also may increase your risk.

Pregnant women who get sick with COVID-19 are more likely than nonpregnant women to...



need care in an intensive care unit (ICU)



need a ventilator for breathing support



die from the illness

You and your ob-gyn should talk about your risk of severe illness if you get sick.

Benefits to getting vaccinated

The COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States are up to 95 percent effective in protecting against severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19.

Getting vaccinated during pregnancy may help protect...



Safety and fertility facts



The vaccines cannot give you COVID-19. The vaccines do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19.



COVID-19 vaccines are safe to get during pregnancy. Scientists have compared the pregnancies of women who have received COVID-19 vaccines and women who have not. The reports show that these women have had similar pregnancy outcomes. Data do not show any safety concerns.



After you get vaccinated, the antibodies made by your body may be passed through breastmilk and may help protect your baby from the virus. ACOG recommends that breastfeeding women be vaccinated against COVID-19.



There is no evidence that the COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility. ACOG recommends vaccination for anyone who may consider getting pregnant in the future.

How will I feel after getting the vaccine?

It is common to feel discomfort after getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Remember:



If you have a fever or other discomfort after getting a shot, you can take acetaminophen. This over-the-counter medication is safe during pregnancy.



If your discomfort lasts more than a couple of days or if you have questions, talk with your ob-gyn.

If you have had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine in the past, talk with your ob-gyn before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

Other things to consider

- Some COVID-19 vaccines require two shots to be fully effective. When you get your first shot, you should ask when you need to return for your second shot.
- You may choose to keep wearing a mask even when fully vaccinated. Masks are most important for people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. All fully vaccinated people should still wear masks when recommended by the CDC, your state or local government, and businesses or workplaces.



You are fully vaccinated 2 weeks after the second dose of a two-dose vaccine, or 2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine.

More information

- Other questions about COVID-19, pregnancy, and breastfeeding: <https://www.acog.org/COVID-Pregnancy>
- More vaccine considerations for people who are pregnant and breastfeeding: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>
- Other COVID-19 vaccine questions: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines>

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