



COVID-19 Vaccine

Talking Points

For Health Care Providers

The **Lake County Health Department** recently conducted public opinion research of residents who are vaccine hesitant to better understand what might address their concerns and motivate them to get the shot. The research indicated that an individual's personal doctor is the most trusted resource when it comes to information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

While we know doctors are prepared to talk with patients about the benefits of vaccines and medical concerns they have, in this toolkit, we share common concerns among vaccine hesitant and messages that resonated based on the research. We hope this will help you answer patient questions and correct misinformation.

PATIENT CONCERN:

"The vaccine was created so quickly, it can't possibly be safe."

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

"You are not alone in questioning the safety of the vaccine and I'm glad you're asking me questions. Based on the medical research I have seen the vaccines are the best way to protect you and your family." *[Add personal note if appropriate, e.g. I have been vaccinated and so has my entire family.]*

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

All of the available COVID-19 vaccines have been extensively tested and approved for use.

- **The science used to create the vaccines is not new.**
 - The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines which stimulates the body to create a protein to fight the virus. The use of mRNA has been studied since the 1990s.
- **The vaccines are not experimental.** All three vaccines were tested in human trials that started in May 2020. Those who participated in the early trials have now had the vaccine for over one year and continue to be monitored for any health issues. Tens of thousands of individuals from different demographic backgrounds and with various health issues participated. One of the reasons it can take a long time to develop a vaccine is because you need enough people to participate in the trials. COVID-19 spread so rapidly and infected so many people, the trials could be conducted more quickly.
 - All three vaccines are authorized for emergency use. Pfizer has since received full FDA approval for everyone 12 and older.
 - *[The research shows that patients value their doctor's opinion. While all three vaccines are effective there are benefits to each one. If someone is interested in learning more about a specific vaccine, please try to answer their questions, and if you're comfortable, share which vaccine you received.]*

Vaccines are the best way to protect you, your family and friends from COVID-19, especially those with high-risk health conditions.

- Even with the vaccine, it is possible you could get what is called a "breakthrough" case, but it is likely to be much less severe as if you're vaccinated.
- In Lake County during the month of September, the vast majority of those in the hospital because of COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

PATIENT CONCERN:

"I'm worried I will get sick if I get the vaccine and I can't afford to take time off work."

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

- "I understand your concern. Some people have experienced minor side effects like tiredness, headache, muscle pain, and some have experienced fever or nausea, but in most cases, it doesn't last very long. Everyone's experience with side effects is different."
- "Many employers are offering paid time off to get the shot. Do you know if your employer is doing this?"
- OR, "Could you get the vaccines after work the day before a day off? Side effects typically do not last longer than 12 to 24 hours."
- "For unvaccinated individuals in Lake County, a quarantine of 10 to 14 days is required for every exposure to a person with COVID-19, which would result in more days lost from work over a year. Right now, vaccinated individuals wouldn't have to stay home, unless they become infected, which is rare."

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

Vaccines are the best way to protect you, your family and friends from COVID-19, especially those with high-risk health conditions.

- While you may feel some side effects after getting the COVID-19 vaccine, those who get COVID-19 could be ill for much longer. Mild symptoms of COVID-19 could last for around two weeks, but others have been hospitalized for much longer, which means you could be out of work for a much longer period of time.
- In Lake County during the month of September, the vast majority of those in the hospital because of COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

PATIENT CONCERN:

"I'm worried about the vaccines' impact on my fertility."

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

"I have seen the online claims about the vaccine impacting fertility. This not based in fact whatsoever."

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

There is no evidence that the shots impact fertility in men or women.

- A rumor that the vaccines cause infertility started in Europe late last year and has been refuted by multiple scientific studies.
 - The CDC recommends the COVID-19 vaccine for people who are trying to get pregnant or may become pregnant in the future.
 - In February 2021, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine released a joint statement debunking this rumor and saying that no loss of fertility has been reported among those who participated in the clinical trials or the millions who have received the vaccine since authorization.
- Studies show that pregnant women infected with COVID-19 can be at greater risk for death, hospitalization and serious complications, compared with women who are vaccinated. Because of COVID-19, pregnant women across the country are being hospitalized at a greater rate than before.
 - (If applicable) I have highly recommended to my pregnant patients that they get vaccinated.

PATIENT CONCERN:

"I'm a healthy person. I'm not worried about getting too sick from COVID-19, so I don't feel I need the vaccine."

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

"You are healthy. What we're seeing is that symptoms vary among healthy people. I've seen healthy people develop serious symptoms. I've also seen healthy people have mild cases but give it to their family members who get really sick."

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

Not getting vaccinated puts you at much higher risk of severe COVID-19.

- Vaccines are the best way to protect you, your family and friends from COVID-19, especially those with high-risk health conditions. Even if you have a mild case, you could give it to your family members, who could get very sick.
- Even if you're young and healthy, you can still get seriously sick for a long period of time, which can possibly cause lasting damage to your immune system.
- We still don't know why COVID-19 causes such severe disease in some people, so it's impossible to predict whether you'll have a mild or serious case if you are exposed.

PATIENT CONCERN:

"If I've already had COVID-19, do I still need to get the vaccine?"

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

"I'm sorry you had COVID-19 – but I'm glad you're okay. That's a great question."

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

We don't know how long natural immunity lasts, so it's important to get the vaccine as an extra precaution.

- There is not enough information currently available to say if or for how long people are protected from getting COVID-19 after they have had it.
- Early evidence suggests natural immunity from COVID-19 may not last very long, but more studies are needed to better understand this.
- Some scientists believe the vaccine offers better protection for coronavirus than immunity post-COVID-19.
- Re-infection is possible. Because of this, getting a vaccine even if you have been sick before is a good idea.

PATIENT CONCERN:

"It's my body. The government can't tell me what to do with it."

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

"I have heard others say that as well. My recommendation for you to get the vaccine is based on my medical training and review of the science and research around the vaccine – not based on what the government is saying."

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

Vaccines are the best way to protect you, your family and friends from COVID-19, especially those with high-risk health conditions.

- In Lake County during the month of September, the vast majority of those in the hospital because of COVID-19 are unvaccinated.

PATIENT CONCERN:

“I’m confused about booster shots. A third dose seems like a lot after I’ve already had two. Does it mean the vaccine isn’t working?”

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

“I understand that the guidance around boosters has been confusing, but now we have clear direction from the CDC and FDA that everyone 18 years and older should get a booster to increase their immunity. Teenagers ages 16 through 17 years old can also get a booster dose.”

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

Immunity against COVID-19 decreases over time.

- We don’t know for sure the pace at which the vaccines become less effective, but studies show that they do lose some of their ability to prevent COVID-19 infections over time.
- A booster shot will increase immunity to the disease and better protect you from breakthrough infections and variants.
- For younger and healthier adults, getting a booster can lessen the chances of getting sick and of spreading the virus to someone more vulnerable.
- People who received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine are eligible for a booster shot six months after their second dose.
- People who received a Johnson & Johnson vaccine are eligible for a booster shot two months after their initial dose.

Vaccines are the best way to protect you, your family, and friends from COVID-19, especially those with high-risk health conditions.

- In Lake County during the month of September, the vast majority of those in the hospital because of COVID-19 are unvaccinated.
- Cases are rising again. The potential of a winter surge due to rising cases increases the urgency of getting people as much protection as possible.

PATIENT CONCERN:

“My child is only 5 years old. I don’t think they’re old enough or big enough to get the vaccine.”

FIRST, HEAR AND RECOGNIZE THEIR CONCERN:

“I know you want to do what’s best for your child. I talk to parents frequently about these concerns, and my job is to help them keep their kids safe and healthy. The COVID-19 vaccine is a great way to do that.” *[If applicable, share personal anecdote about your child getting vaccinated.]*

THEN, SHARE THE FACTS:

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been approved for children 5 years and older.

- Children 5 through 11 years old receive one-third of the adult dosage. Children will receive the vaccine with a smaller needle.

The vaccine is safe and effective for children.

- Data that Pfizer-BioNTech presented to the FDA showed that the vaccine was 90.7% effective against symptomatic COVID-19 for children 5-11.
- Although most children infected with COVID-19 have only mild symptoms, vaccination could prevent many infections, as well as disruptions to schooling, hospitalizations, and severe complications from COVID-19.
- Severe side effects like myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) are very rare, treatable and are usually short-lived. In most instances, adolescents who've developed myocarditis have improved quickly. Experts agree that the risks of getting COVID-19 are much higher than getting the vaccine.
- Getting your child vaccinated will help protect them from spreading the virus to family, friends, teachers, and people in the community who are at higher risk of getting sick.