

Communicating with Your Patients About Vaccines: What You Say and How You Say It Matters!

Most of your patients feel favorably about vaccines. How you and your staff discuss vaccines with patients will most likely determine whether patients accept a vaccine. These tips will help you have positive vaccine conversations with your patients. Positive conversations will help ensure that they stay up to date on vaccines to keep themselves, their family, and their community healthy.



Understand the importance of your recommendations.

Your vaccine recommendation is the #1 reason patients choose to be vaccinated. Your patients will likely not ask for a vaccine. They are waiting for you to recommend them. A strong recommendation will usually lead to acceptance of the vaccine.

Ask all staff to discuss vaccines in a consistent way.

Make sure that all staff who greet and converse with patients communicate the same positive attitude about vaccines. Any vaccine misinformation or negative attitudes from any staff could impact patient acceptance for years to come.

Assume that all patients will be accepting vaccines and choose your words accordingly.

“Today you are due for your influenza vaccine” rather than “Will you be getting your flu vaccine?”

Bundle your vaccine recommendations and suggest the vaccines on the same day and in the same way.

“Today your child is due for Meningitis, HPV, Flu and Tdap vaccines” rather than “Today your child is due for school shots, and we also have HPV vaccine.”

Be ready to answer questions.

It is not necessary to give a lot of information about vaccines when you recommend them; however, be ready to answer any questions that your patient might ask. Remember that they are likely to accept vaccines if you can answer their questions in a short simple way.

Remember the 3 P's: Personal, Persistent, Patient

Make it personal: “I gave the HPV vaccine to my kids.”

Show persistence: “I understand that you are not interested in receiving the Flu vaccine today, but I feel it will keep you healthy and I strongly recommend it.”

Be patient: It may take a few visits to build trust with your patients. If your patient refuses vaccines on a visit, continue to make strong recommendations at each visit.

Know how to communicate with patients who are hesitant. Remember the 3 A's: Ask, Acknowledge and Advise.

- Clarify their concerns.
- Validate their feelings.
- Provide confidence in your expertise as their provider.
- Refute misinformation.
- Repeat strong recommendation.



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