

COVID-19 Vaccine Education:

A guide for conversations with nursing home team members

With COVID-19 vaccines being distributed now, nursing home staff and others have many questions. Some staff members may not have the most up-to-date, accurate information. There are many rumors, and misinformation may be influencing some peoples' decisions.

In order to protect ourselves and others, it is vital that as many eligible people as possible receive the vaccine. However, we understand that there are legitimate questions and concerns.

We developed two short resources (a text document and a slide presentation) to guide nursing home leaders in conversations with staff members and residents. These materials are designed to help each individual think through whether or not they would like to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and to address any questions or concerns. They include a list of resources for additional information and contact information for Project ECHO-IHI staff.

We suggest that you review both the script outline and the slide presentation. Please identify any questions that were not addressed and contact Alice Bonner at abonner@ihi.org for further information. Thank you for all of your dedication and efforts to support nursing home residents, their care partners, and each other.

Script Outline for Conversations with Staff Members about Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine (Current as of January 14, 2021)

Some frequently asked questions/concerns that you are likely to hear are:

- Are currently approved COVID-19 vaccines safe?
- How do COVID-19 vaccines work?
- I'd rather wait until other people (my coworkers) have gotten the vaccine and see how they do; then I'll consider getting it with the second clinic. Is that ok?
- What are short and longer-term side effects?
- How soon after vaccination will protection start and how long will I be protected?
- Could I get COVID-19 from the vaccine?
- Could someone in my family (household) 'catch' COVID-19 from me if I get vaccinated?
- I am pregnant and not sure of safety during pregnancy.
- I'm not pregnant but I might want to get pregnant and I worry about fertility.
- I'm under 18 years old – can I still get the vaccine?
- I'm worried about missing work and not getting paid – I need the money.
- I'm not sure that I can trust the health care system.
- I get my information from Facebook or other social media – is that ok?
- If I already tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies or had the illness, should I still get the vaccine?
- Are there medical or other contraindications to getting the vaccine?

These questions are addressed in the slide presentation as well as in CDC, AMDA, and other toolkits. Some answers may depend on the particular situation or your location. We may not have evidence yet and we need to be honest when we don't have an answer. All guidance is subject to change due to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation. *Check back frequently for any updates from your State Department of Public Health, CMS, and CDC.* It is vital to share the most recent information from reputable sources. Additional resources are provided on the last page.

Preparing for the Conversation

1. Form a team to address vaccine distribution among staff and residents (including care partners or legal decision-makers).
 - Identify groups in which each staff person may be included (e.g., nursing assistants, environmental services/housekeeping, nutrition). Some staff may fall into more than one category – ask each individual which group they prefer for vaccine education/discussions.
 - Some individuals have reported that they do not trust information from senior leaders (e.g., Nursing Home Administrator, Director of Nursing, Medical Director). They may prefer to hear information presented by co-workers, friends or colleagues, family members – people whom they trust.
 - Ask each person if they have a preference or comfort level with certain staff members vs others and try to honor those preferences as much as possible.
2. Identify the person/people to serve as educators with staff and residents. Many people prefer to receive information from a trusted source, such as a friend or colleague who works in the same role as they do. They are more likely to follow guidance from someone they trust, who speaks the same language and shares their values.
 - Consider the racial, ethnic, cultural backgrounds of each person. Consider their primary language and whether written materials need to be translated.
 - Provide systematic training and support for staff members learning how to facilitate groups or 1:1 sessions and educate coworkers.
 - Include a timeline that describes when each staff member will receive group and/or 1:1 education.
 - Include follow up for staff members who initially state that they do not wish to receive the vaccine (or not yet).
 - Follow the same procedures 1a) through 1d) above for residents and care partners as well.
- People assigned to work with individual staff members should be included on the master list/documentation so that it is clear that everyone is going to receive the information that they need to make a decision.
- Provide opportunities for people to participate in a group and/or in 1:1 sessions. Ask individual staff members about their preference for group or individual sessions.
- Create a quiet, comfortable, safe space for discussions with individual staff members or groups.

Having the Conversation

3. Ask each individual what they know and what they would still like to learn in order to make a decision about the vaccine. Ask them where they typically obtain health information. *DO NOT RUSH* – take time to hear each person’s questions and concerns.
 - Begin the conversation by listening, and listening more.
 - Respond to any outstanding questions or concerns from the staff person first.
 - Demonstrate respect for the person and their values.
 - Do not judge them, or express negativity about any misinformation that they may believe.
 - Do not focus on proving them wrong. Celebrate that they are engaging in a conversation about this topic!
 - Provide the slide deck as a conversation guide and for FAQs
 - Show empathy and compassion. Show enthusiasm about the positive aspects of having vaccines available and hopefully reducing sickness and death from the virus.
 - Gently redirect the person to more trustworthy information sources and explain what we know from a scientific perspective, what has evidence and what does not (use the slide presentation as a teaching aid or adapt as needed).
- Ask again what information is still important to them in order to make their decision about the vaccine.
- Ask if it would be ok to have a follow up discussion within the next few weeks (before the second vaccination clinic).
- Thank them for their time and careful consideration of vaccine options.
 - Reinforce that this is long-term care employees’ opportunity to set an example for others.
 - Emphasize that we are protecting not only ourselves, but populations within nursing homes and communities (public health aspect of the vaccination campaign).
- Provide contact information (cell phone or landline, email for Project ECHO-IHI team member) so that the person can call with any questions or ideas.
- Recognize and celebrate each person’s leadership. Invite them to participate in the vaccination distribution efforts and be ready to suggest a specific role or roles that they could play if interested.
- Document the process.

Resources

Updated CDC vaccine information and FAQs:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/toolkits/long-term-care/faqs.html>

Interim Guidance for Use of Vaccines with mRNA:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/info-by-product/clinical-considerations.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/covid-conversations/answering-questions.html>

About COVID-19 vaccines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines.html>

Provider Resources for COVID-19 Vaccine Conversations with Patients and Answering Patients' Questions: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/covid-conversations/>

<https://www.ahcancal.org/News-and-Communications/Pages/GetVaccinated.aspx>

https://www.leadingage.org/sites/default/files/FAQs%20and%20Resources%20on%20COVID-19%20Vaccines%20-%20Dec%2015.pdf?_ga=2.90976218.1543642018.1608475050-884601056.1526425449

https://profile.paltc.org/COVID19-Toolkit?&_ga=2.102264132.490886795.1610214697-1380688460.1574384479&_redirected=1 (free, but requires you to log in; membership not required). Includes slides on vaccine hesitancy and webinar with NAHCA.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/31/health/coronavirus-black-hispanic-vaccination.html>

ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) information on COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy, lactation and breast feeding:

<https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-advisory/articles/2020/12/vaccinating-pregnant-and-lactating-patients-against-covid-19>