



Building Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines

Vaccination is a critical tool in the fight against COVID-19. While many New Yorkers have received their COVID-19 vaccines, others are still unsure whether they want to be vaccinated.

There are several concrete steps that providers can take to learn about and address patients' concerns, and help patients develop confidence in COVID-19 vaccines. Providers are trusted sources of information for patients. **A strong recommendation from a provider is the greatest predictor of a patient getting vaccinated.** Even if you don't provide COVID-19 vaccination, you can help build confidence in COVID-19 vaccines so patients can make informed decisions.

What influences vaccination decisions?

Reasons a person may accept, delay or refuse vaccination depend on their circumstances and may be related to their personal experiences, vaccine knowledge and awareness, and societal influences such as media, social norms and political and religious views ([World Health Organization, 2017](#); [Hamel 2020](#)). Additionally, structural inequities, racist policies and the collective memory of racial trauma contribute to low vaccine acceptance and confidence among Black, Indigenous and other people of color ([Scharff 2010](#); [Jaiswal 2019](#); [Simonds 2014](#)).

Many people who have reservations about COVID-19 vaccination cite concerns over vaccine safety, speed of vaccine development, long-term side effects, and distrust of government or the pharmaceutical industry. Many take the "wait and see" approach, where they may accept vaccination after seeing positive outcomes from others who have been vaccinated.

What is vaccine confidence?

Vaccine confidence is built on the trust people have in the vaccines themselves, the providers who administer them, and the processes and policies that lead to vaccine development, licensure, manufacturing and recommendations for use.

It is important to respect that vaccination is an individual choice. Many patients may have received confusing or misleading information about vaccines. As a provider, you can deliver clear and accurate information to build confidence in COVID-19 vaccines.

Framework for Building Vaccine Confidence:

1. Be Familiar with COVID-19 Vaccines

Learn about the available COVID-19 vaccines so you can have informed conversations with your patients. Be able to explain simply and clearly to patients how the vaccines work and how the government assesses and continuously monitors their safety.

Learn about the [Pfizer-BioNTech](#), [Moderna](#) and [Johnson & Johnson/Janssen](#) COVID-19 vaccines, the [clinical considerations](#) for their use, and [vaccine safety monitoring systems](#).

2. Become a Vaccine Champion

Become a vaccine champion in your own health care system, practice and community. Share stories and images of clinicians, staff and patients receiving their vaccine via email, social media and educational literature (with permission, if people are identifiable).

3. Engage and Educate Patients

Engage with patients often regarding vaccination to build vaccine literacy and confidence over time. **Tell patients that you recommend vaccination for them.** For patients who express uncertainties around vaccination, determine their underlying reasons and concerns by asking open-ended questions and displaying empathy. Answer patients' questions without judgment or placing pressure on them and invite them to contact you if they have more questions in the future.

See [Addressing Patients' COVID-19 Vaccine Questions: A Guide for Health Care Providers](#) for suggestions on how to start conversations and tips for responding to and answering common questions and concerns.

Strategies for Patient Engagement and Education

1. Build trust

Providers may encounter individuals who have concerns about getting vaccinated because they do not trust the health care system. Such distrust may be due to historic and modern-day injustices, including experiences of racism. Individuals may fear medical exploitation or unequal treatment and may have limited interactions with the health care system due to past negative experiences. Recognize and validate these concerns. Let patients know that COVID-19 vaccines were studied in thousands of volunteers, many from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, after each vaccine is authorized and goes into widespread use, there is an extensive monitoring system to identify any problems. Over 180 million people in the U.S. have safely gotten a COVID-19 vaccine. Ongoing safety monitoring of COVID-19 vaccines is what allowed the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to recognize and investigate certain rare side effects associated with different vaccines (see below).

2. Speak to the benefits of vaccination

- COVID-19 vaccination will help keep you from getting COVID-19 and protect your family and community.
- COVID-19 vaccination is a much safer way to help build protection than natural infection.
- COVID-19 vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the public health emergency.
- COVID-19 vaccination can help you safely return to normal activities.

3. Explain that side effects are to be expected

Many people experience side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Let patients know that side effects are to be expected and will vary from person to person. Common side effects for all the available vaccines include fever, chills, headache or body aches, and pain or redness at the injection site. Let patients know that side effects are a sign that the immune system is working and usually resolve within a day or two.

For more information on adverse events associated with vaccination, see [myocarditis and pericarditis following mRNA Vaccination](#), [thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome following Johnson & Johnson vaccination](#), and [Guillain-Barré syndrome following Johnson & Johnson vaccination](#). Development of these conditions following vaccination is rare, and the CDC has determined that the benefits of the vaccines far outweigh the risks of vaccination.

4. Counter myths and misinformation

There are many rumors about COVID-19 vaccines. Invite patients to share their concerns or other things they've heard and use the opportunity to provide correct information. Practice empathy, and remember, many people have heard these rumors from friends and family whom they trust. Earn their trust by taking the time to listen, acknowledging their fears, and providing accurate information in a way that makes sense to them and within their cultural context.

See [COVID-19 Vaccine Facts](#) for answers to common questions and misconceptions.

5. Help interested patients make a vaccine appointment

Once a patient has decided to get vaccinated, if the vaccine is not provided on site providers or staff can help the patient make an appointment using an [online request form](#) or by calling **877-VAX-4NYC** and **pressing 2** at the second prompt. See [COVID-19 Vaccination Resources](#), for information about finding a vaccination site, eligibility, transportation, the in-home vaccination program and interpretation services and accessibility for people with disabilities at City-run sites.

Provider Resources

- [COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Providers](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Resources for Providers](#)

Patient Resources

- nyc.gov/covidvaccines contains various printable resources in multiple languages, including:
 - [How the mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Work](#)
 - [How the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 Vaccine Works](#)