



# HAVE A CONVERSATION

Learn how to have respectful and productive discussions from experts in behavior change.



**"As difficult as it may be to start a conversation about vaccination, it can change—or save—a life."**

**Dr. Wood** is an award-winning professor at North Carolina State University and executive director of the Consumer Innovation Consortium. Her research focuses on how people react to change or innovation, and most recently, on public acceptance of COVID-19 vaccines.

**At the end of the day, we all want what's best for each other. It's time to do whatever it takes to move past the pandemic. Use the tips below to have a productive conversation about vaccination—because we can't wait any longer.**



## START WITH LOVE

Before you get into the subject of vaccines, remind the person you're speaking with that you're having this conversation because you love and value them.



## CHECK YOUR JUDGMENT AT THE DOOR

Approach the conversation with empathy and a genuine willingness to listen. Listen with your whole body. Look at them. Lean in. Make eye contact. Don't interrupt. Don't prejudge or rush to give your point of view. Plan ahead to help ensure you're in the right environment to speak without distraction, ideally face-to-face. Remember, you have your own strong feelings about COVID-19 and getting vaccinated. You may not find a middle ground with just one conversation—and that's okay.

## HOW TO START:

**"Hey, can we talk about COVID-19 vaccines? I love you so much, and I've got to ask... are you vaccinated?"**





## ASK PRODUCTIVE QUESTIONS

Ask non-judgmental questions to understand the root of their hesitation. Many times, there are deeper issues. For instance, a previous negative healthcare experience, such as a misdiagnosis or a doctor who was dismissive of their symptoms, can lead to distrust of the medical community. Understanding the root of one's hesitancy is the first step toward a productive conversation about vaccines.<sup>1</sup>

It is also important to ask open-ended questions to explore concerns instead of those that prompt a yes-or-no answer and shut down the conversation. Keeping the conversation moving will help you understand your loved one's concerns about vaccination and where they might be getting their information.<sup>2</sup> When they answer, try to see things from their foundation of beliefs. It can be challenging to manage a situation where you feel informed and are dealing with someone who is basing their opinion on incorrect information. The goal is to find a middle ground.

### HOW TO START:

**"Tell me what you think About COVID-19 vaccines. What are some of your concerns? Is there something I can do to help?"**



## LEARN TOGETHER BY FINDING SOURCES YOU BOTH TRUST

No one wants to be lectured. Instead of trying to force information on your loved one, ask where they get their news about vaccination. See if you can find a source you both trust—whether an organization or family doctor—to gain insights together.

### HOW TO START:

**"I'd love to find a source we both trust to look into this concern together."**



## KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING BY STAYING CALM

Start and end the discussion by remaining open, upbeat and calm. Don't transfer your anxiety onto your loved one.

### HOW TO START:

**"I was scared too, but I found some great information from these sources. It was easy to schedule. Sure, my arm was sore for a few days, but I'm excited that I can see my family again and do the things I love."**



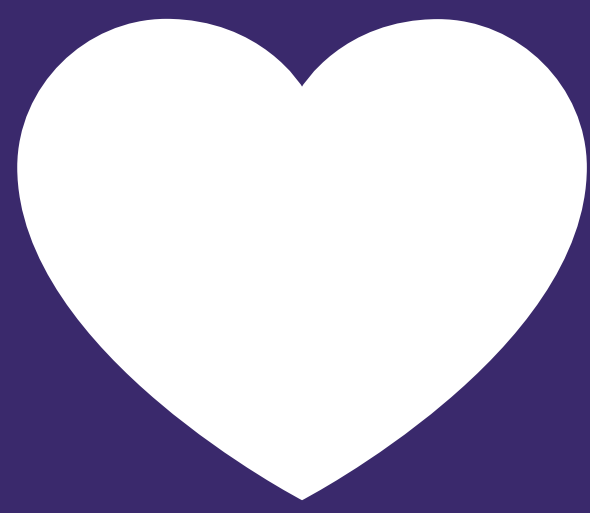
## BE SUPPORTIVE

When they're ready to take the next step, be ready to help. See if you can offer assistance with childcare, transportation or anything they may need that will make it easier for them to find the time to get vaccinated.

### HOW TO START:

**"What do you need to make an appointment? Is there anything I can do to make this easier? I want to help."**





**SHARE YOUR  
'WHY' — AND  
END WITH LOVE**

**HOW TO  
START:**

**“ I love you so much, and I’m  
always here to listen.  
I appreciate you talking with  
me—I couldn’t live with myself  
if something happened to you  
and I hadn’t said anything.  
Maybe we can talk more about  
this more another time. ”**

Remember, you might not change their mind with one conversation, and that’s okay. Thank them for talking with you. No matter how the conversation went, it’s important to end with an affirmation of how much they mean to you: a smile, a hug or a reminder of how much you love and value them can help you revisit the conversation later.

## NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY IN THESE COMMON SITUATIONS? **WE HAVE SOME SUGGESTIONS:**

### **How well do the vaccines work? I’m hearing that people vaccinated are still getting COVID, so why bother?**

COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough cases are expected—no vaccine is 100% effective at preventing illness. Even when fully vaccinated people develop symptoms, they tend to be less severe symptoms than in unvaccinated people. This means they are much less likely to be hospitalized or die than people who are not vaccinated.<sup>3</sup>

### **I don’t trust the vaccines yet. I think it’s better to wait.**

I understand that waiting for more time to pass can feel like the safer option. But according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), waiting to get vaccinated allows the virus to mutate into newer variants that could potentially spread more rapidly or cause more severe illness than previous strains, especially in unvaccinated people.<sup>4</sup>

### **I’m worried about how the vaccines were developed.**

Researchers were able to develop COVID-19 vaccines faster than other vaccines because of a collective pooling of resources and years of previous foundational research on related viruses. While COVID-19 vaccines were developed rapidly, all of the steps involved with bringing a new vaccine to the public, including vaccine development, clinical trials, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorization or approval, manufacturing and distribution, have been taken.<sup>5</sup>

### **I already had COVID-19, so I don’t need to get vaccinated.<sup>6</sup>**

According to the CDC, it is recommended that people who have already had COVID-19 get vaccinated to help avoid reinfection. Vaccination can provide a higher, more robust, and more consistent level of immunity to protect people from hospitalization for COVID-19 than infection alone for at least 6 months.<sup>7</sup>

### **I want to get pregnant soon, and the vaccines aren’t safe for my fertility.**

The CDC has advised that there is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause fertility problems (problems trying to get pregnant) in women or men, and experts recommend that people who are trying or considering getting pregnant in the future also get vaccinated against COVID-19.<sup>8</sup>

### **I’m pregnant and worry that getting vaccinated might hurt my baby.**

According to the CDC, pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill with COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people. Therefore, pregnant individuals are advised to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible to best protect maternal and fetal health. In addition, data supports that COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy might help protect babies against the virus.<sup>9</sup>

### **I have time to get a vaccine. There’s no rush.**

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 makes individuals less vulnerable to infection, making the virus less prevalent in the population. This creates herd immunity. Getting as many people immunized as quickly as possible will help keep our families and communities safe.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.voicesforvaccines.org/content/uploads/2016/02/Vax-Hesitant-Loved-Ones-Toolkit.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/talk-about-vaccines.html>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/why-measure-effectiveness/breakthrough-cases.html>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/distributing/steps-ensure-safety.html>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/distributing/steps-ensure-safety.html>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s1029-Vaccination-Offers-Higher-Protection.html>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/planning-for-pregnancy.html>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/pregnancy.html>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.muhsenberg.edu/news/2021/whyyoushouldgetthecovidvaccineasoonasyouable.html>