



UK Health
Security
Agency

in partnership with

NHS



Have confident COVID-19 vaccine conversations

A guide for health, social care and public health professionals

YOU are key

Evidence indicates that there is greater trust, and that **vaccine uptake is higher, in campaigns conveyed by healthcare professionals.**

This is especially true for addressing those who have had less access to health services, and where the **healthcare professionals are representative of the communities** that they are talking to.

If you are yourself worried about the vaccine, do speak to your GP or colleagues, or **go to a trusted source** such as [NHS](#), [WHO](#) or [UKHSA](#) for further information and reassurance.

Preparation is key

It may feel like a big responsibility to support people but reading all the trusted resources available to you will help you feel more confident about the topic.

Have information to hand: Create your own resource pack, with FAQs, model Q&As and key messages, so you feel prepared. The resources [here](#) can support your conversations.

Use trusted community or cultural spaces, if you can, such as schools, community centres, ethnic food stores, food banks, Saturday schools, places of worship or take an opportunistic moment with your patients and allot enough time to have the conversation. Choose somewhere where you are both comfortable.

Work closely with local influencers such as community and faith leaders, utilising them as facilitators to bridge the gap and build trust by using their networks to reach their communities.

Active listening and open questions are key

[Make Every Contact Count](#) – it takes people **at least three instances of communications** before they begin to process information.

Start the conversation with open questions such as “How do you feel about the vaccination?” or “Are you happy to have a chat about the vaccine?” and remember that people have the right to refuse your advice.

Make time to listen, understand real concerns and focus on **providing evidence-based information** and answers to questions for people to make an informed decision, rather than ‘pushing’ the vaccine.

Help find solutions to barriers: Ask if there is a practical reason stopping them from attending an appointment to have the vaccine and support them to find solutions.

Plant the seed: If people continue to be undecided, provide information and resources to help them make their own decision.

Don’t know: Never be afraid to say, “I don’t know.” Tell them you will find the information out and get back to them.





What are the benefits of COVID vaccinations?

Vaccination allows you to develop immunity in a safe and controlled way, without being ill with COVID-19 and passing it onto others.

COVID vaccines:

- protect against serious illness, **hospitalisation and death** - people who are [unvaccinated are up to eight times more likely to be hospitalised](#) with COVID-19
- reduce the **likelihood of you getting COVID-19**
- reduce the risk of **spreading COVID-19** to others, including people who are more vulnerable
- **strongly recommended in pregnancy** as this is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies, including admission of the woman to intensive care and premature birth of the baby
- reduce the risk of **developing Long COVID** – a [UK study](#) of double-vaccinated adults showed a 41% lower likelihood of reporting Long COVID than unvaccinated people

Even if you have already had COVID-19, getting the **COVID vaccine will give you extra protection, stimulating a stronger and longer lasting immune response** than natural infection, which will help against any future new variants.

For those who have yet to take up their first or second dose, it is never too late to come forward – every dose counts.



Are the COVID vaccines safe?

- **Billions of people have been safely vaccinated** against COVID-19 around the world.
- Like all medicines and vaccines, the COVID vaccines underwent **extensive and rigorous multi-stage testing** through clinical trials.
- The COVID vaccines are **continually monitored** for safety and effectiveness. In the UK this is done by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
- Serious adverse reactions and **side effects** are [extremely rare](#) and are investigated. Remember that COVID-19 disease itself can cause serious complications in the short term and Long COVID.
- **COVID vaccines were tested** on tens of thousands of men and women from different ethnic backgrounds and there **is no evidence** any of the vaccines **will work differently in different ethnic groups**.
- COVID vaccines do not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 and can be **used by everybody**, including immunocompromised individuals or people with autoimmune disease.



How to book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment

Anyone aged 16 or over can book their first, second and booster (or third dose)



[appointment online on the NHS website](#)

Or by calling 119



You need to be [registered with a GP](#) to book an appointment online

If you are not registered with a GP you can get a COVID vaccination at a [walk-in or pop-up centre](#), where there are no ID checks and your immigration status is not relevant.

More information and support

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine – NHS](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination guides – UKHSA – translations and easyread available](#)
- [Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines - WHO](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine questions - British Society for Immunology](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine resource links – MECC](#)
- [MECC – Short COVID vaccine conversations](#)
- [COVID-19 fertility and pregnancy - public – RCOG](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy – for professionals – RCOG](#)