

Together for Health

**A resource for engaging conversations
about vaccines**



This booklet contains information, activities and reliable sources so you can talk to your clients about the importance of vaccines and other ways to protect their health.



Tip sheets

4-19

At-a-glance facts about vaccines and the conversations you may have with clients. Topics include:

- **SHARING FACTS** that encourage vaccination and other healthy behaviors
- **TAKING THE RIGHT TONE** when talking about vaccines
- **ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS** clients may have
- **RESPECTING VALUES** while promoting health

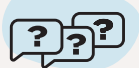


Frequently asked questions

20-23

Answers to common questions, such as:

- How do I explain Long COVID?
- How do I talk about vaccines related to children and pregnancy?
- How do I address clients' religious concerns?



Correcting false information

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Guidance for helping clients identify misinformation about vaccines.



Conversation guides

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Example conversations between CHWs and clients.



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A tool to help you practice talking with clients.



More resources

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Links to more items in the toolkit.



**When you talk to clients,
it's important to be clear
and know the facts.**



Sharing accurate scientific information can build your clients' trust and let them know that vaccines are safe and effective.

**Here's what
CHWs should
know about
vaccines.**



Here are some facts about vaccines.



Vaccines are **carefully tested** before they are made available. Even after they have been approved, they are still regularly monitored for safety.



Vaccines **save lives** by preventing illness, disability and death. Vaccines are our best defense against illnesses like polio, measles, COVID-19 and many others.



If you do get sick, being vaccinated **lowers the risk** of your illness becoming dangerous or deadly.



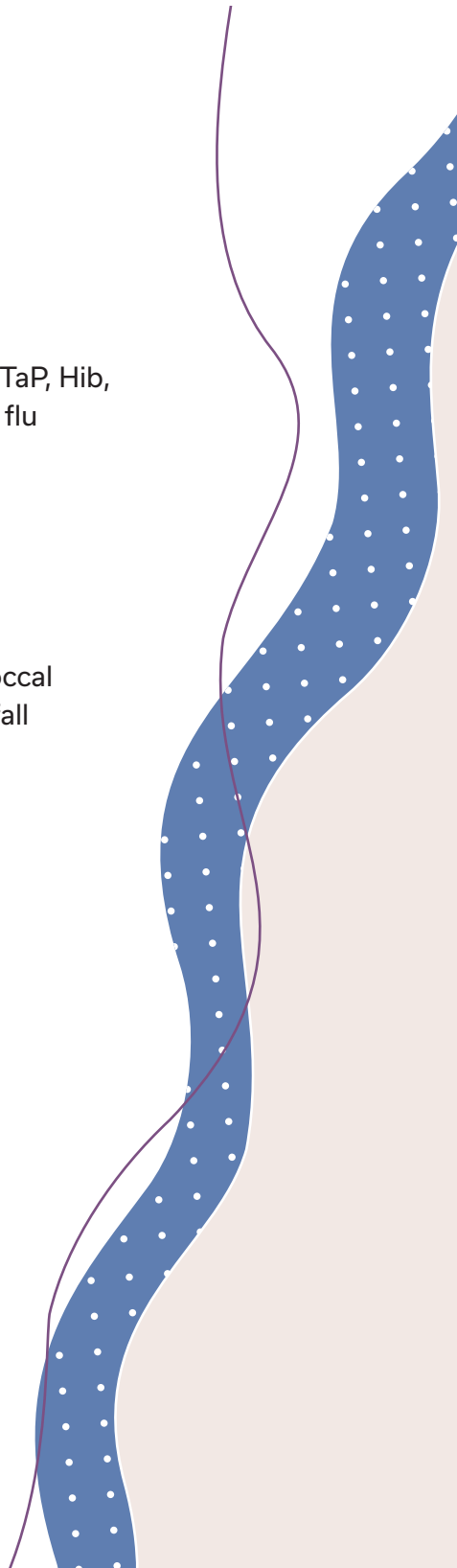
Vaccines **help your body recognize** and fight infections. They also prevent the spread of disease in your community.



Here are common vaccines and when they're recommended.

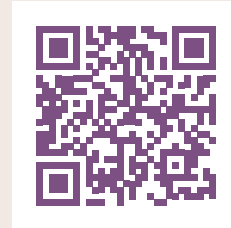
- **FOR INFANTS BIRTH TO 12 MONTHS:**
Hepatitis B at birth, RSV, rotavirus, DTaP, Hib, pneumococcal, polio, COVID-19 and flu
- **FOR CHILDREN AGED 1-8:**
Additional doses of some of the infant vaccines, plus hepatitis A, MMR, chickenpox and flu
- **FOR CHILDREN AGED 9-18:**
HPV at 9 years, Tdap and meningococcal at 11 years, flu and COVID-19 every fall
- **FOR ADULTS:**
Flu, COVID-19, shingles, RSV, pneumococcal and Tdap boosters
- **PREGNANCY-RELATED VACCINES:**
Tdap, flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines are recommended during pregnancy to protect both parent and baby

Each vaccine is different. Clients, especially those with weakened immune systems, should consult their providers about which ones they may need. Most pharmacies, community clinics or health departments offer vaccine appointments.



Learn more

Scan the QR code, then click the **Tip Sheets** button for more resources and links.



To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.

This is funded by a grant from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the Washington State Department of Health (6NU50CK000515-05-14).

DOH 130-118 April 2026 English



When you have conversations with clients about vaccines, your tone and attitude are important.



Here's how you can have productive discussions and put them at ease.

It's OK to have questions about vaccines.



There is a lot of false or misleading information about vaccines, and clients may share concerns, doubts and strong opinions about them. No matter how you or your clients may feel, you can lead a respectful, meaningful conversation about the importance of vaccines.

- **Ask if you can share vaccine information.**
- **Stay calm, respectful and polite.**
- **Listen first. Respond thoughtfully.**
- **Ask what questions they have.**
- **Keep an even tone.**
- **Acknowledge their feelings.**
- **Be gentle and encouraging.**



Be curious and don't assume. Ask them open-ended questions to understand their feelings and values.

FOR EXAMPLE

“Can you tell me what you have heard about vaccines? What questions do you have about vaccines for your family?”

Acknowledge their concerns and avoid judgement.

FOR EXAMPLE

“You are not alone in having questions about vaccines. We all want to keep our loved ones safe and healthy, and there is conflicting and confusing information on the internet and social media.”

Focus on the personal benefits of vaccines.

FOR EXAMPLE

“I can tell you are concerned about your family's health. Vaccines can keep you and them from getting sick.”

Keep it simple and friendly, but also let them know you are a reliable source of information.

FOR EXAMPLE

“Can I share with you what I've learned about how vaccines protect you and your loved ones?”

Offer resources and support.

FOR EXAMPLE

“If you are interested, I can share information that may answer some of your questions about vaccines. I am also available to continue this conversation if you ever want to talk more.”



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When clients come to you with concerns about vaccines, you can respond in ways that are friendly, supportive and factual.



Your responses can start a productive conversation that makes your client **more confident** about getting vaccinated.

I can address your concerns.



Here are some common client concerns.

Adapt these responses so they feel authentic to you. Be compassionate and curious, but also lead with facts.

“I read online that vaccines cause autism.”

Vaccines do not cause autism. This has been studied by scientists for years. Genes and environmental factors can cause autism. Vaccines do not affect genes.

“I heard you get sick after getting vaccinated.”

Some people feel soreness in the arm where they were vaccinated. You may feel tired and slightly feverish for a day. More serious side effects are extremely rare.

“I don't have insurance and vaccines are expensive.”

Most vaccines are free or low-cost. In Washington, children under 19 can get vaccinated for free. There's also a program providing low-cost vaccines for uninsured adults 19 and over.



“I am afraid to get vaccinated because of my immigration status.”

You do not need to share your immigration status with anyone to get vaccinated.

“I’ve already had COVID, and I feel fine.”

Anyone can get COVID-19 more than once, which can cause long-lasting symptoms or increase risks like heart problems. Even healthy people should get vaccinated to protect against serious diseases.

“Doctors only want me to get vaccinated because they profit from it.”

Doctors and scientists recommend vaccines to protect people. They do not profit from them.

“I already got that vaccine. Why do I need to get it again?”

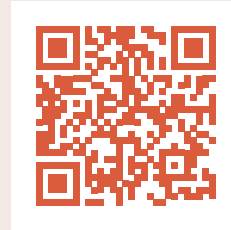
Viruses change and vaccines are updated to better protect against them. Your provider may also recommend getting vaccinated again for longer-lasting protection.

“The leader at my church said I shouldn’t get vaccinated.”

Almost all religions allow or encourage people to get vaccinated. It might be helpful to share facts with your church leader. I can share more info with you.

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**You can promote health
in ways that respect your
clients' cultures.**



You can inform clients that vaccines protect against severe illness while also supporting their decisions. Continue having vaccine conversations to better understand their views.

**Along with
vaccines, these
habits can keep
you healthy.**



You may have clients who do not want to get vaccinated. As a CHW, you can continue to promote the science of vaccines while respecting their choices. These are everyday health tips that can keep your clients, their loved ones and their communities healthy.

If you get sick:

- Remember that young children, infants, older people and people with chronic health conditions are **at higher risk** of the harmful effects of many illnesses.
- **Stay home** if you can, and avoid crowded indoor spaces.
- **Cover your mouth** with your elbow or a tissue when you cough and sneeze.
- **Wear an N95** mask to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses that cause diseases like COVID-19 and the flu.
- **Wash your hands** often.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, antiviral treatments like Paxlovid can help you **recover faster and prevent serious illness**.



Keep yourself from getting sick.

- Keep a healthy and balanced diet, stay active and get a lot of sleep to **boost your immune system.**
- Stay up to date on general **health appointments and screenings.** See your provider at least once a year. Regular check-ups can keep you healthy and reduce your risk of getting sick.
- **Wash your hands** after using the bathroom, before eating and before touching your face.

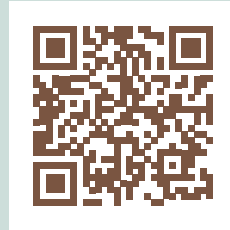
Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent many illnesses.

- Getting vaccinated can **protect you** from several deadly diseases.
- Science-based information shows that **vaccines have saved lives** and prevented illnesses and suffering. Vaccines have made diseases like polio and measles much less common and have lowered the risk of lifelong disabilities.



Learn more

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Questions from CHWs like you.



Every client conversation is different.

You may still have questions about how to address certain topics.

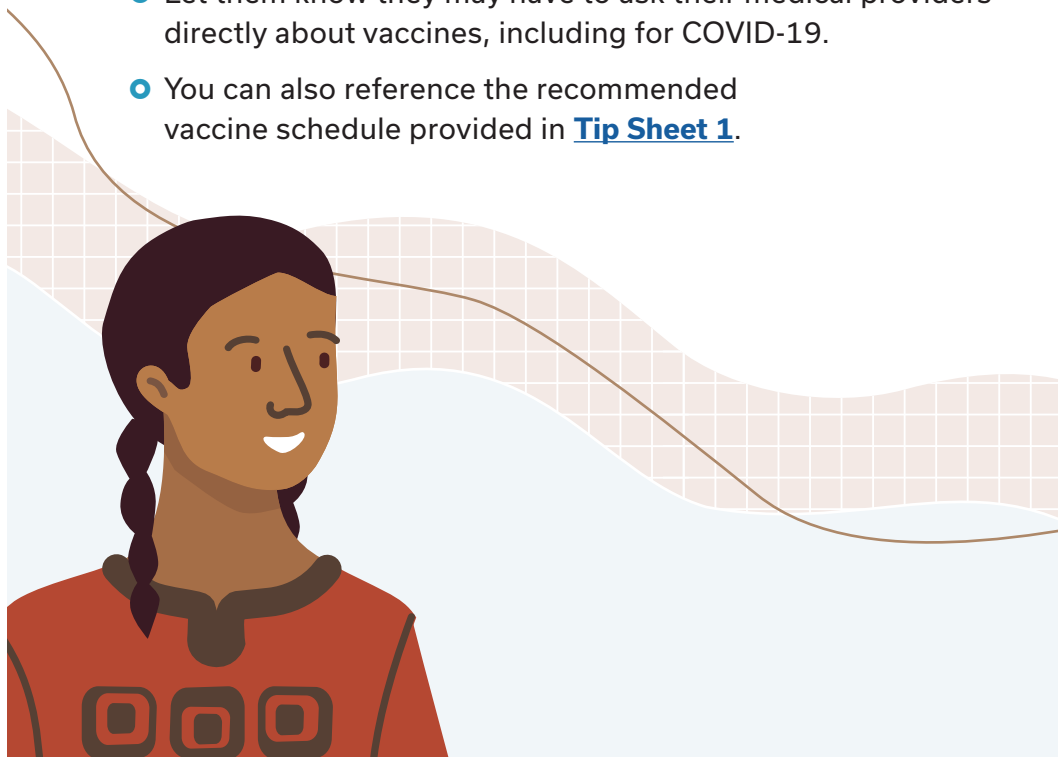
Here are the answers.

What should I do if a client won't get vaccinated for religious reasons?

- Many faith leaders support vaccination, but some have made people afraid and suspicious of vaccines.
- Everyone's beliefs are different, so it's best to listen to and ask questions of your client rather than trying to change their mind. Recommend them to a provider or medical professional who will give them factual information.
- Let your client know you're open to talking more and providing facts about vaccines.

How do I advise clients who are pregnant or new parents and have concerns about vaccinations?

- Encourage them to talk to a health care provider or their pediatrician about the safety of vaccines — for themselves and for their children.
- Let them know they may have to ask their medical providers directly about vaccines, including for COVID-19.
- You can also reference the recommended vaccine schedule provided in [Tip Sheet 1](#).



Am I allowed to contact a client's primary care provider if they have questions I can't answer?

- Yes, but always get the client's permission first and avoid asking providers for personal health information.
- You can help clients schedule vaccine appointments through their provider, or ask what vaccines they need.

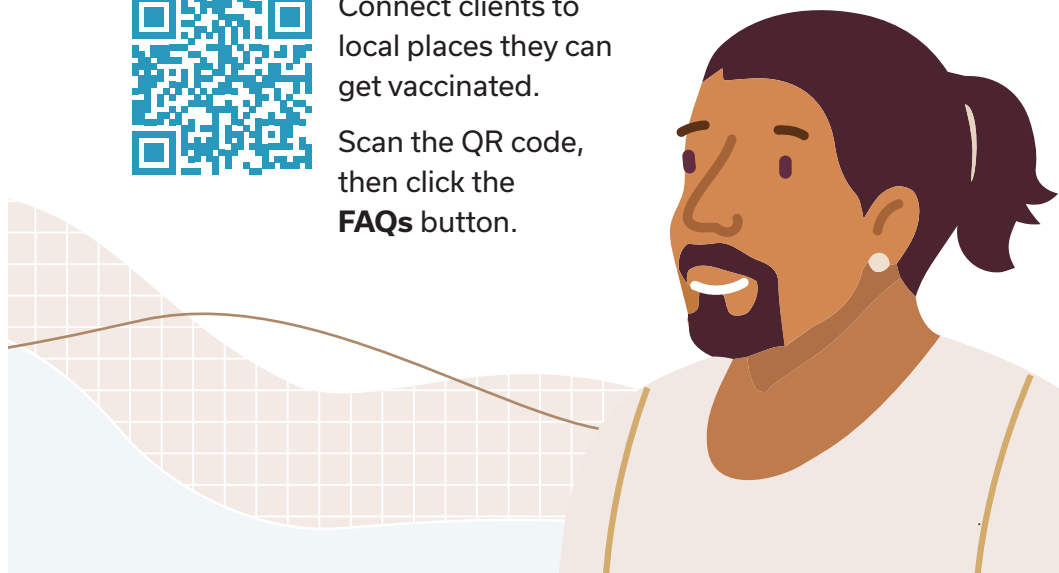
What if a client won't get vaccinated because of negative experiences with past providers?

- Acknowledge their experiences and feelings, and let them know their concerns are valid and that they deserve to be treated with respect.
- Offer to talk through the vaccination process. Allow them to ask questions, take their time and make informed choices.
- If they are interested, connect them to a trusted provider who you know will listen, respectfully answer questions and create a more positive experience.



Connect clients to local places they can get vaccinated.

Scan the QR code, then click the **FAQs** button.



How can I help uninsured clients get vaccinated?

- Let clients know that many vaccines are available for free or at low cost without insurance.
- Direct them to community clinics, pharmacies and local health departments that offer vaccine appointments regardless of insurance status.
- Connect them to community-based and culturally responsive programs that offer free or reduced-cost vaccines for uninsured adults.

What is Long COVID and how do I explain it to clients?

- Anyone who has had COVID-19 can develop Long COVID, which means their symptoms last for 3 or more months.
- Common symptoms include chronic fatigue, breathing difficulties, dizziness, memory problems and changes to heartbeat.
- Doctors are still learning about Long COVID. If a client's symptoms are long-lasting, have them contact their provider.
- Staying up to date on vaccinations is the best way to reduce the risk of Long COVID. Vaccines are available for free or at low cost.



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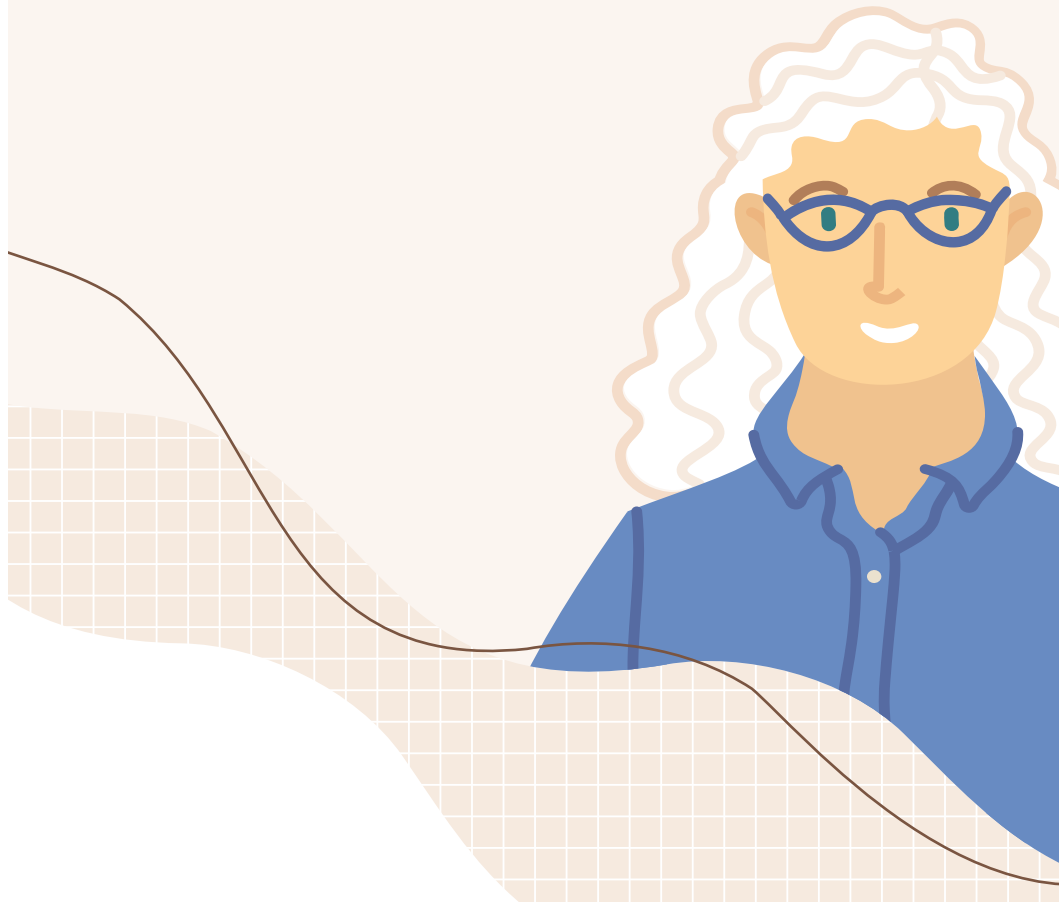


Clients may come to you with misleading information they have seen and heard about vaccines.



Here's how to help them get the facts.

Correcting false information.



How can I help my clients identify false vaccine information?

When clients see or hear something questionable online or in their community, you can suggest they ask themselves these critical questions.

- **WHERE DOES THE INFORMATION COME FROM?**

If it's from a hospital, clinic or local health department, it's likely trustworthy. If it's from someone sharing opinions without facts, be skeptical.

- **DOES IT USE EXTREME WORDS LIKE "ALWAYS,"**

"NEVER" OR "ALL"? For example: "Never get vaccinated" or "all vaccines work the same way." Health information is rarely that simple, and each vaccine is different.



● **IS IT TRYING TO SCARE OR WORRY YOU?**

Does it lead with prompts like “This is what they don’t want you to know!” or “10 vaccine secrets that will shock you!” If it makes you feel scared, anxious or angry, it’s likely false.

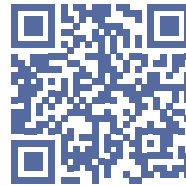
● **DOES IT ATTACK A PUBLIC FIGURE OR ORGANIZATION WITHOUT SHARING FACTS?**

For example: “Doctors are lying to you!” or “The government is covering up the truth about vaccines!” If so, think twice.

● **IS IT TRYING TO SELL YOU SOMETHING?**

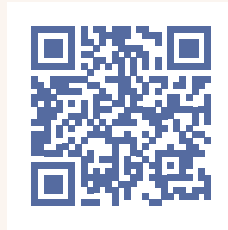
A lot of false information is used to promote products. If it urges you to buy something at any point, it might not be trustworthy.

Scan the QR code, then click the button under **Misinformation Document** for recommended fact-checking sites and other resources.



Learn more

Scan the QR code and look under the **Misinformation Document** section for recommended fact-checking sites and other resources.



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Conversation Guides



When you talk to clients about vaccines, it's important to have a conversation that informs them, supports them and respects their culture.

Remember to:

- **GET CONSENT** from your client before talking about vaccines: "Would you like to talk about how vaccines can protect you and your loved ones?"
- **DON'T USE** words and phrases that could make them feel pressure: Avoid "must," "required" or "have to."
- **LEAD WITH POSITIVITY**, so your client doesn't feel judged for their feelings: "It's OK to have questions about vaccines. I can do my best to answer them."

A successful conversation might:

- **FOCUS ON RESULTS.** For example: "Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself from many diseases and reduce the severity of illness."
- **EMPHASIZE THE PERSONAL BENEFITS OF VACCINATION.** For example: "I can tell you are concerned about your family's health. Vaccines can keep you and them from getting sick."
- **INCLUDE PERSONAL AND ENCOURAGING STORIES ABOUT VACCINES.** For example: "I decided to get vaccinated because I didn't want to get sick around my elderly father and my kids. I am happy with my decision."



Here's how some positive conversations might go.



How to talk to:

A client who doesn't want to get vaccinated.

CHW: I'm so glad I got to see you today. How have you been?

Client: I'm fine. Though my wife and I had COVID a few months ago and we missed some work.

CHW: I'm sorry to hear that. What did you do when you had COVID-19?

Client: We stayed home and rested.

CHW: I'm glad you're feeling better now. May I ask if you are up to date on your vaccinations?

Client: I don't believe in them. I think natural immunity is more powerful than vaccines.

CHW: Have you ever been vaccinated?

Client: Yes, but not in the last few years.

CHW: I see. Can you tell me more?

Client: My friend told me that vaccines actually make you sicker.

CHW: It's true that some people do feel mild side effects, but they go away quickly. Are you comfortable if I share some facts about how vaccines are safe and effective?

Client: I'm really not interested.

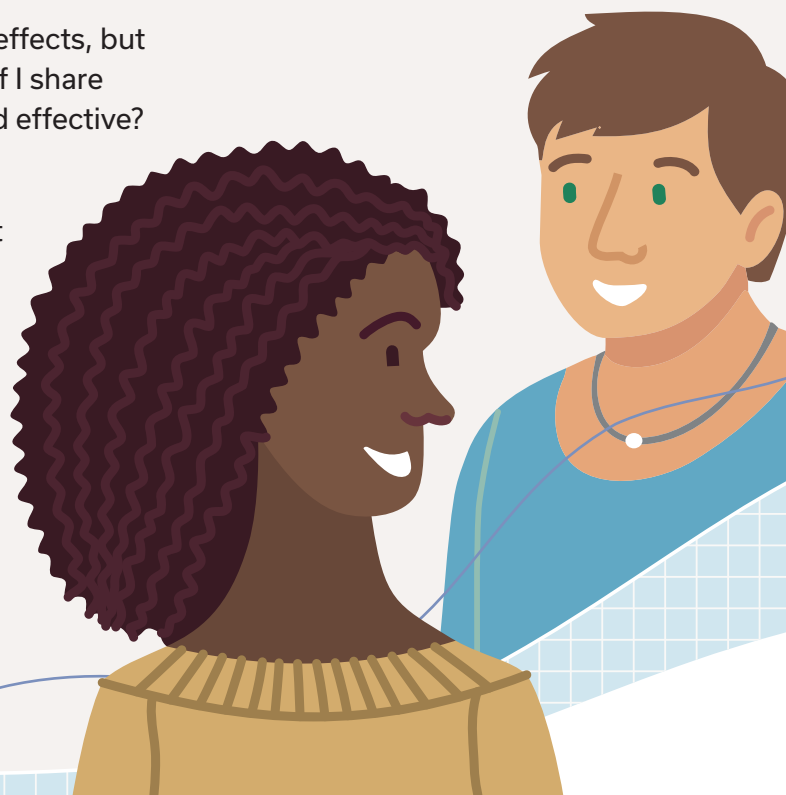
CHW: I understand. If you want to talk more about vaccines in the future, I would be happy to. How are you staying healthy?

Client: I'm active and I try to eat right.

CHW: Keep up those healthy behaviors. And if you want to learn more about how vaccines keep you and your family from getting sick, I am available to talk more.

This conversation is successful because it:

- Promotes and encourages healthy behaviors beyond vaccinations
- Addresses concerns about side effects and peer influence
- Stays friendly and curious
- Invites the client to stay in touch for further conversations





How to talk to:

A client who has safety concerns about vaccines.

CHW: How have you been feeling?

Client: I haven't been feeling well.

CHW: Oh no, what's wrong?

Client: I just got over the flu.

CHW: I'm sorry to hear that. May I ask if you're up to date on your vaccinations, including the flu shot?

Client: I don't think I need vaccines.

CHW: Why do you feel that way?

Client: I have heard they actually make you sicker.

CHW: I understand your concern. Vaccines are the most effective way to protect yourself from several diseases. You might feel side effects from a vaccine, but that is your immune system working to protect you.

Is there anything else you're concerned about?

Client: I might miss work if I have side effects.

CHW: Side effects are usually mild and go away after a day or two. Some people who don't get vaccinated may be sick for longer and miss more work.

Client: Oh, I don't want that.

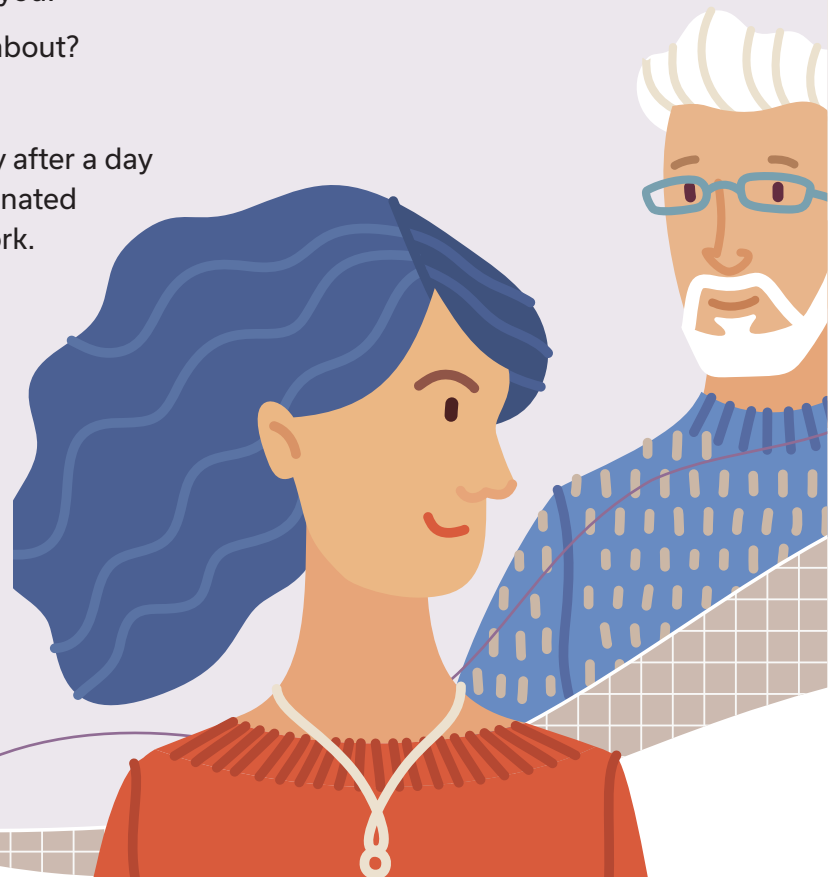
CHW: Would you like more information about what vaccines you may want to get?

Client: That would be fine, thank you.

CHW: Great! And I'm available if you have any more questions or concerns.

This conversation is successful because it:

- Leads with curiosity, asking the client about their health and vaccine history
- Presents scientific facts
- Offers to help the client make the next steps and get vaccinated
- Invites the client to stay in touch for further conversations





How to talk to:

A client with a large family and who is mostly uninformed about vaccines.

CHW: How are you?

Client: I have been stressed with a family celebration coming up.

CHW: What are your plans?

Client: My extended family will be staying in our house. Kids, grandchildren, everyone.

CHW: You must be looking forward to everyone gathering together! As you know, people are more likely to get sick when they're traveling or feeling stressed.

Are you worried about yourself or others getting sick?

Client: A little bit. I always seem to get sick when we're all together, and I can't afford to take more time off work.

CHW: Do you mind if I ask if you are fully vaccinated?

Client: I'm not sure if I am. Why?

CHW: Vaccines are the most effective way you can protect yourself from illness. It also protects kids, older people and those who can't get vaccinated from getting sick.

Client: I don't know which vaccines I would need.

CHW: I can share information about recommended vaccines so you can ask your provider about them.

Client: That would be helpful, thank you.

CHW: You're welcome! You can always let me know if you need anything else.

This conversation is successful because it:

- Leads with open-ended questions that allow the client to share
- Includes facts about spreading illness
- Helps the client make their own decisions while promoting the effectiveness of vaccines
- Invites the client to stay in touch for further conversations





How to talk to:

A client who has challenges getting health care.

Client: I haven't been to the doctor in awhile.

CHW: Oh, really? Why not?

Client: I don't have insurance, so I haven't gone. I also haven't found a doctor who speaks my language. But I really don't want to get sick this year.

CHW: I understand. It's tough to not have health insurance. I can recommend ways for you to still get care.

May I ask if you're vaccinated?

Client: I thought you needed insurance to get vaccinated.

CHW: Most vaccines are available with no insurance or at little to no cost. You can also get them at your local pharmacy or places that don't need you to make an appointment.

Client: That's good to know. But I don't have a car, so I can't get to any appointments. And the bus doesn't run near my place.

CHW: There are organizations that give free rides to appointments, and services that offer free translation.

Client: That would be helpful. When are they available?

CHW: I don't have an exact answer now, but I can find out and let you know. Is there a good time when I could send you that information?

Client: Anytime would be great!

CHW: OK! If I could get your contact info, I'll send it over.

This conversation is successful because it:

- Shows compassion for the client's situation
- Offers solutions
- Offers to share more information later
- Informs the client about available services
- Asks permission to share information

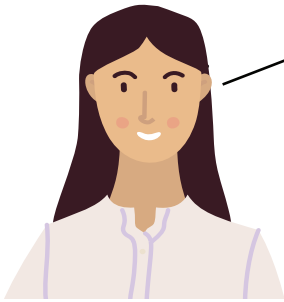




PRACTICE WORKSHEET

What would you say?

Here's a chance for you to practice having a vaccine conversation with clients. Below are examples of things clients might say. In the blank spaces, write how you'd respond.



It's important to:

- Avoid judgement
- Lead with facts
- Be respectful
- Offer to continue the conversation

Pro tip: Ask for consent to recommend local organizations and resources.

For help, compare your responses to information provided in **Tip Sheet 3**.

“I've already had COVID and I feel fine.”

“I heard you get sick after getting vaccinated.”

“The leader at my church said I shouldn't get vaccinated.”

“I don't have insurance and vaccines are expensive.”



More resources

Now that you have studied these materials about having productive and positive vaccine conversations, you can access more audio, video and practice activities.

Visit wportal.org/CHW-VCT



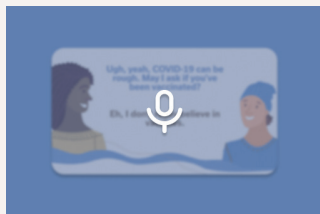
Wallet card

Print this pocket-sized, on-the-go card that includes tips and reminders for starting conversations. Use it yourself or share it with clients.



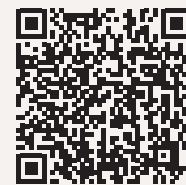
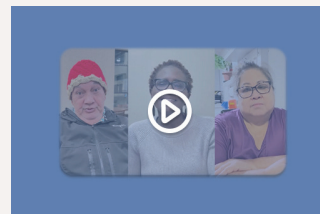
Worksheet

Write and practice your own responses to common client questions about vaccines.



Audio conversations (English only)

Listen to or watch this scripted conversation between a CHW and a client who is hesitant to get vaccinated.



Testimonial videos (English only)

Hear stories from community members and CHWs about how they share helpful information about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Watch it yourself or show it to clients.

Find more detailed information about vaccinations.

Vaccine recommendations:

Scan to find Washington State Department of Health vaccine recommendations and vaccine schedules.



West Coast Health Alliance:

Scan to learn about the WCHA, which includes California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington. The WCHA makes collaborative decisions around community health guidelines based on the best available science.



Linktree resource library:

Scan to browse a library of reliable vaccine resources.



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