Vaccine Ambassadors Toolkit

Welcome, and Thank You!

Thank you for becoming a Vaccine Ambassador. Getting as many people as possible vaccinated against COVID-19 is the fastest, safest, and most effective way to end this pandemic, and your work as a Vaccine Ambassador will help get us there.

There are many ways to be a Vaccine Ambassador, and you can choose the activities that fit into your schedule and your comfort zone. From sharing accurate vaccine information on social media to going door-to-door to answer questions and let people know about upcoming clinics, there's a whole range of things you can do to help raise vaccine confidence among your family, friends, and community.

In this toolkit, you'll find tips for starting and having conversations about COVID-19 vaccines, answers to the questions people frequently ask about COVID-19 vaccines, ideas for posting on social media, guides to reliable sources of vaccine information, and information about canvassing door-to-door.

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Support for Vaccine Ambassadors

Being a Vaccine Ambassador can mean whatever you want it to mean. We'll be in touch with you each month to see how you're doing and how we can best support you. We'll ask about what's working for you, what activities you're finding effective, challenges you're encountering, and your ideas for other initiatives.

Tips for Having a Conversation About COVID-19 Vaccines

It's important to remember that as a Vaccine Ambassador, you are not trying to persuade people to get vaccinated. Instead, you are sharing information so that people can make their own decisions. There are a few guiding principles for having these kinds of conversations that include: being respectful and empathetic, being authentic and open, and focusing on facts in plain language.

Respect and Empathy

1. **Listen more than you talk.** The goal is to have a conversation, not a debate. Be positive, inviting and respectful. Listen respectfully to their questions and concerns. Remember that the choice is theirs to make with their doctor or healthcare provider.

2. **Remain calm and empathetic.** Respect people's concerns and acknowledge that it's ok for everyone to have questions about vaccines. Don't talk down to people, lecture or use guilt to talk them into making the choice you want them to make. Instead, be understanding, positive and hopeful. Keeping your tone and volume as steady as possible will be key to having a thoughtful, open discussion.

3. **Meet people where they are.** Before you share your own thoughts, ask questions to discover where they are in their decision making process. Are they close to booking an appointment or have they already decided they would never get it? This will help drive the conversation forward and also help cultivate an inclusive environment for the discussion. Sharing your thoughts too early may come off as judgmental.

4. **Recognize that this will likely be more than one conversation.** It is rare that people immediately change their minds on something. Usually, we want to think and analyze the situation before making a final decision. Consider this before you start the conversation and know that you may not see immediate results. You may need to return to the conversation multiple times.

5. **Avoid aggressive questions.** Asking aggressive questions like "why won't you get the vaccine?" makes people feel the need to defend themselves; this closes down the conversation. Try something like "tell me more" or other clarifying questions instead.

6. **Recognize and respect a person's right to refuse a vaccine.** If you're not ready to hear "no," you may not be ready to have a conversation.

Honesty and Emotion

7. **Be authentic.** People will be more likely to share their opinions if you are vulnerable with them. For example, you can talk about your own hesitation, a death in the family that prompted you to get the vaccine, or your feelings about being able to go about your daily life more safely. Share why you got vaccinated and why it's important to you and your family. And be honest about your own experience of getting vaccinated, whether positive or negative.

8. **Recognize emotions.** Show how vaccinations can help us get back to the things we love, like connecting with others, spending time with family and friends, traveling and going to events. Some people may feel frustrated by logistical barriers to getting vaccinated. Or they may subscribe to rumors or theories that corroborate a fear or mistrust they already hold. Acknowledge fears and concerns. Listen for these feelings and share facts to help people work through their concerns and frustration.

Facts in Plain Language

9. **Give facts in small bites that invite questions.** No one wants to be talked down to. By giving information in small pieces and discussing that information more deeply, you can avoid someone feeling like they are being lectured with facts.

10. **Be specific.** Don't just say "the science is solid." Provide facts about the safety and efficacy of vaccines, like the talking points included here. Remember, you shouldn't give medical advice, so encourage people with more complicated questions to talk with their doctor or healthcare provider. Finally, be sure to speak plainly.

11. **Investigate benefits and risks.** Learn about their concerns by brainstorming with them about the benefits and risks of getting the vaccine. This will help the conversation stay a discussion, not a lecture. Listen to the things they list as risks without making assumptions. It's possible that their mistrust comes from recent experiences rather than fear.

12. **Focus on *their* values.** Try to connect with what they think is important, not necessarily what you think would be important. Ask them why it would be important to get the vaccine and relate back to that. For example, if they want to protect the health of their family or their community, remind them of how getting the vaccine would help achieve that goal.

13. **Listen for misinformation.** Help dispel misinformation through the course of the conversation. You can acknowledge their concern by saying "yes, I've heard that one too," or "that's a common concern," and then ask about where they heard about it. You can then refer back to a trusted, neutral source that can give accurate information instead.

14. **Avoid politics.** In politics, there's a winner and a loser. But vaccination against COVID-19 isn't a political issue. Don't engage in political debate! Stick with fact-based information, especially when sharing sources.

Dealing With Conflict

Even with all this, the person you're talking to may become angry or defensive. Here are some tips on navigating the rest of the conversation:

- If politics have come up, try to steer the conversation away from those issues and back to fact-based information.
- Keep your own tone and volume even. Do not match their tone or voice level if things escalate, as that is how a productive conversation can quickly shut down.
- Don't take their anger personally if you have asked open ended questions and have been genuinely curious/vulnerable. They may have been asked several times already and have grown frustrated.
- If you find yourself becoming angry or defensive, it may be time to end the conversation. You can return to the topic another time, if that seems appropriate.
- End the conversation if you feel unsafe. There is no need to continue talking to someone who is behaving badly. Helping people get the facts about vaccination is important, but your mental, emotional, and physical safety come first. If someone is

yelling at you, insulting you, demeaning you, or threatening you in any way, do whatever you need to do to get out of that situation immediately.

Sample Talking Points About COVID-19 Vaccines

The choice to get vaccinated against COVID-19 is a personal one, but it has a far-reaching impact. Here are some of the reasons to get vaccinated:

- **End the pandemic.** Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is an important tool to help stop the pandemic. Each person who gets vaccinated helps save lives, restore the economy, prevent the disruptions caused by COVID-19, and bring us closer to the activities and people we've missed.
- **Save lives.** All COVID-19 vaccines that are currently available in the United States help prevent hospitalization and death due to COVID-19.
- **Protect yourself and your loved ones.** Getting vaccinated is a safe way to build protection; getting COVID-19 is not. No matter your age, health, or lifestyle, COVID-19 can have serious, life-threatening complications, and there's no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you or your loved ones. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others in your community.
- **Once you are up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations, you can start doing more.** Indoor and outdoor activities pose minimal risk to individuals who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations. Additionally, the risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 is reduced for individuals who are up to date with their vaccinations.

Answering Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccines

Should I get vaccinated against COVID-19?
Yes. The vaccine will help protect you from getting COVID-19. If you do end up infected after getting vaccinated, the vaccine helps prevent the serious illness that can lead to hospitalization or death. By getting vaccinated, you are also helping to protect the most vulnerable people among your family, friends, colleagues, and community.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe?
Yes. All approved and/or authorized COVID-19 vaccines are held to the same safety standards as every other vaccine (including routine childhood immunizations). The approved and/or authorized COVID-19 vaccines have been rigorously tested through clinical trials and have been administered to millions of people across the globe for more than one year. The clinical trials involved tens of thousands of people to make sure they safely and effectively protect people of different ages, races, and ethnicities. There were no serious safety concerns. CDC and the FDA are continuing to monitor the vaccines.

On August 23, 2021 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued full approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for people ages 16 and older. Full approval by the FDA means that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine now has the same level of approval as other vaccines routinely used in the U.S., such as vaccines for hepatitis, measles, chicken pox and polio. Full approval represents the FDA's highest level of confidence in a drug's safety and effectiveness.

The second full approval of a COVID-19 vaccine came on January 31, 2022 when the FDA approved the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine. The vaccine is being marketed under the name Spikevax. Like the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, Spikevax has the same level of approval as other routinely used vaccines in the U.S. like those for chicken pox, polio, and hepatitis. This means the FDA holds the highest level of confidence in Spikevax' safety and effectiveness. Spikevax is intended for use in people ages 18 and older.

Are there long-term side effects from the COVID-19 vaccine?
Based on over a year of tracking people who have received COVID-19 vaccines, there is no evidence of long-term side effects. It's unusual for side effects from any vaccine—including COVID-19 vaccines—to appear more than 8 weeks after vaccination.

Can I get vaccinated if I have allergies?
Yes. Even people who have a history of severe allergic reactions to things like foods, pet dander, venom, latex, and pollen are recommended to get the vaccine. If you have had a

previous severe allergic reaction *to another vaccine*, ask your doctor if you should get the COVID-19 vaccine. Ask your doctor if you have concerns about specific allergies.

The only allergies that are relevant to the COVID-19 vaccine are Polyethelene Glycol (PEG) and Polysorbate. PEG is used in Pfizer and Moderna's mRNA vaccines, and Polysorbate is used in Johnson & Johnson and Novavax's vaccines. That means even if you are allergic to one of these substances, you can still get vaccinated. People who are allergic to PEG should get the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen or Novavax vaccine, and people who are allergic to Polysorbate should get a Pfizer or Moderna mRNA vaccine.

Will the shot hurt or make me sick?
Many people experience mild flu-like symptoms for one or two days. This is a normal sign that the body is building protection against the virus. If these side effects—sore arm, mild fever, chills, body aches—don't go away in three days, or you are having more serious symptoms, call your doctor.

Is it better to get natural immunity from having COVID-19 rather than from the vaccine?
No. Vaccination is the best protection, and it's safe. Even young, healthy people have experienced severe illness and long-term effects from COVID-19. The vaccine prevents you from developing chronic health problems that can come from COVID-19. And while there may be some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection lasts.

If I have already had COVID-19 and recovered, do I still need to get vaccinated?
Yes. Even people who have had COVID-19 should get vaccinated, because you can catch it more than once. While there may be some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don't know how long this protection will last.

If I have an underlying medical condition, is it safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine? Yes. In fact, it's even more important for people with medical conditions like heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, diabetes, and those that compromise the immune system, to get vaccinated because they are at higher risk for serious illness and complications from COVID-19.

Can my younger child get the COVID-19 vaccine?
As of June 2022, children ages 6 months and older can get vaccinated.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?
No. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use mRNA technology, not the live virus that causes COVID-19, and the Johnson & Johnson vaccine uses a disabled adenovirus that is

in no way related to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. The Novavax vaccine uses a version of the spike protein that does not have genetic material inside and cannot cause disease. However, it typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible to be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and get sick.

Can I get vaccinated if I am trying to get pregnant or want to have a baby in the future?
Yes. The mRNA in the vaccine does not interact with or affect DNA in any way, and it has no effect on fertility.

Posting on Social Media

Posting about vaccines on social media can be a great way to invite conversations with people in your social networks. It can also help to get accurate information out there, and show people who are hesitant that people they know have safely gotten vaccinated. In addition to sharing vaccine information on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc, you can share your thoughts on your own vaccination experience.

- Follow us on social media and share/retweet our updates about vaccines, clinics, and the pandemic:

    - Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/CoMoHealthDept

    - Twitter - @CoMo_HealthDept

    - Instagram - @CoMo_HealthDept

- Add a Vaccine Ambassador Facebook frame to your profile picture. Below are the steps to getting the Facebook frame on your profile picture:

    - Visit https://www.facebook.com/profilepicframes
    - Either change your picture or use the one you currently have
    - The frame is called "COMO Vaccine Ambassador" but you should be able to find it just by searching "vaccine ambassador"
    - Select "use as profile picture" and you are good to go!
- Share personal anecdotes like how you felt after your shots, what encouraged you to make this decision, or how your life has changed positively since getting vaccinated.

- It helps to include an image or personal video with your posts. Audiences are more likely to see and engage with content that has a visual element.

- Use hashtags like #CovidVaccine, #VaccineSaveLives, #VaccineAmbassador,

#LetsMoveForward, etc. on social media to share your positive experiences with getting vaccinated and encourage your friends, families, and neighbors to follow suit.

- The CDC also has a COVID-19 social media toolkit with sample messaging: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/vaccination-toolkit.html

Vaccine Ambassador Graphics

The graphics at the end of this document can be downloaded and used to help let others know that you are a COVID-19 Vaccine Ambassador and are willing to share information and answer questions about the vaccine. They include:
- A Vaccine Ambassador printable sign that can be displayed in a classroom or office setting to let people know that you can help provide them with information and answer questions about the vaccine.
- A Vaccine Ambassador signature that can be used at the bottom of an email.
- A template for a sheet of Vaccine Ambassador badge stickers that can be printed off and worn anytime an ambassador would like to identify themselves. These labels fit on Avery #5395 (2-1/3"x3-3/8") label sheets.

Canvassing Overview

One thing you can do as a Vaccine Ambassador is canvass the community to promote the COVID-19 vaccine. As a COVID-19 vaccine canvasser, you would knock on doors in neighborhoods throughout Boone County and share resources about getting vaccinated against COVID-19. This includes: giving information about upcoming vaccine clinics as well as other places to get vaccinated if they can't attend a particular event, giving out informational flyers, sharing your experience getting vaccinated, and answering questions about the vaccine.

You'll be part of a pool of volunteers who we'll notify when there are opportunities to canvas. You can then sign up depending on your availability. Canvassers should maintain a respectful and pleasant demeanor, be ready to engage people in conversation, be able to navigate residential neighborhoods and be outdoors for long periods of time. Volunteers generally go out for shifts lasting anywhere from 1 to 3 hours, typically knocking on 25 doors per hour.

If you have already signed up for canvassing, thank you! We are excited to have you on board, and we are committed to providing you with the support you need to be successful. If you haven't signed up for canvassing yet but would like more information, please email covidvaccine@como.gov, and we will reach out to you.

Reliable Sources of Vaccine Information

There is a lot of COVID vaccine information out there, but not all of it is from reliable sources. As a Vaccine Ambassador, you will be a trusted source of information for your friends, family, and community, so you need to know where you can go to access fact-based information about COVID-19 vaccines.

- The CDC https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/

- Columbia/Boone County Public Health & Human Services
  https://www.como.gov/covidvaccine/

- The World Health Organization
  https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines

Thank you again for becoming a Vaccine Ambassador! Please reach out to us at any time with questions, suggestions, and ideas. You can email us at covidvaccine@como.gov, call 573-874-CITY (2489), or visit como.gov/covidvaccine.

Door Sign

Email Signature

Printable Badges