

Physician Guide for Communicating With Patients About Vaccines



This resource is designed to provide physicians and other members of the clinical care team with ways to approach conversations about vaccines in response to questions about the recent CDC vaccination schedule changes. Vaccines remain safe, effective and lifesaving. Vaccines are among the most carefully studied medical tools in history and have been used for decades to prevent serious illness, long-term complications, and death. Professional medical organizations continue to strongly support vaccinations based on overwhelming scientific evidence. Fewer people are getting routine vaccines. Rates of vaccination for preventable diseases have decreased, putting patients and community members at risk.

What Can Physicians and Staff Do?

Deliver a clear and strong recommendation for vaccination.

A confident clinician recommendation is the single most important factor influencing vaccine acceptance. A straightforward statement such as “I strongly recommend that you get this vaccine today, because...” remains one of the most effective ways to support vaccine acceptance.

Emphasize Health Benefits.

Explain how vaccination protects patients from serious disease, complications, and long-term health effects. Reinforce that vaccination reduces the risk of hospitalization, severe illness, and disability.

Put the risks of non-vaccination into perspective.

Discuss the potential consequences of vaccine-preventable diseases and compare them with the well-established safety and benefits of vaccines. Highlight practical impacts of illness such as missed work or school, and long-term health impacts.

Listen and Address Concerns Without Judgment.

Vaccine hesitancy often reflects uncertainty - not necessarily refusal. Ask open-ended questions and acknowledge concerns respectfully. Correct misinformation calmly and factually, while keeping the focus on shared goals: health and safety.

Provide accessible information.

Ensure vaccine information is visible and easy to access within the practice. Post educational materials in waiting rooms, exam rooms, and digital platforms.

Designate an office vaccine champion.

Assign a team member to lead vaccine quality improvement efforts. This individual can integrate vaccine discussions and assessments into routine visit workflow.

Advocate for Vaccination.

Actively support evidence-based vaccination practices within your clinic and community to strengthen public trust and improve immunization rates.



Are vaccines still safe and beneficial?

Yes. Vaccines remain safe, effective and lifesaving. Vaccines undergo decades of research, rigorous clinical testing, and continuous safety monitoring. U.S. vaccines have a strong record of preventing illness, hospitalization, and death.

With changes to the CDC schedule, are childhood vaccines still covered by insurance?

Yes, in almost all cases. Public and private insurers are expected to continue covering vaccines historically included in the routine childhood immunization schedule. Programs such as Vaccines for Children are in place to ensure access for eligible families.

Can giving babies and young children many vaccines at once overwhelm their immune system?

No. Even in early infancy, a child's immune system manages thousands of germs daily. Vaccines introduce only a small amount of targeted material to help the body recognize and fight dangerous diseases.

Can Delaying, Skipping, or Spacing Out Vaccines Be Harmful?

Yes. Delaying or skipping vaccines leaves children unprotected during the time they are most vulnerable to serious infections. The recommended schedule is carefully studied and designed to provide protection at the safest and most effective ages. Spacing out vaccines also means more office visits and more potential exposure to sick children.

Who else benefits when my child or I am vaccinated?

Vaccination protects the person who is vaccinated. It also helps prevent the spread of disease to others, including newborns who are too young for certain vaccines, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.

Key Takeaway

Clear, confident, and compassionate vaccine recommendations should be delivered consistently as part of routine care. This approach builds trust, supports informed decision making, and protects patients and communities.

