



## Keep in mind

- As a healthcare provider, you are your patient's most trusted source for information.
- Present vaccines as the standard of care. Make sure your team uses consistent messaging.
- Strongly recommend vaccines.
- Show empathy and be genuinely curious.
- Focus on building partnership and trust.
- Be prepared for the conversation to take place over multiple visits.

## 1 At the first prenatal visit, share information about vaccines. Describe timing of each vaccine.



Vaccines are an important way to keep you and your baby healthy. I recommend getting flu and COVID-19 vaccines at any time during pregnancy. I recommend whooping cough vaccine at 27-36 weeks of pregnancy and RSV vaccine at 32-36 weeks (during RSV season).

## 2 Open the conversation. Make a strong recommendation. Present vaccines as the standard of care throughout the pregnancy.

Clearly state that you want your patient to get vaccinated. Normalize vaccines as part of your patient's care.




Vaccines are the best way to protect you and your baby from getting very sick. I recommend whooping cough, flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines for you and all of my pregnant patients. At your next visit it will be time for your Glucose Challenge Screening Test and your whooping cough and RSV vaccines.

## 3 Respond

I would like to get vaccinated. 

**Encourage an action step:** vaccinate same day or schedule vaccine appointment.

I'm not so sure about getting vaccinated. 

Acknowledge and address concerns. Use the SHARE method and motivational interviewing to share additional information as needed. Remember to use clear language, share your personal experience, emphasize the benefits, and ask follow-up questions. See page 3 for common questions and responses.

## SHARE additional information

- **SHARE** tailored reasons why the vaccine is right for the patient during pregnancy.
- **HIGHLIGHT** positive vaccine experiences (personal or in your practice) to emphasize the benefits and strengthen vaccine confidence.
- **ADDRESS** patient questions about vaccines (e.g., safety, side effects) by using clear and specific language.
- **REMIND** the patient that the vaccine protects the baby and the patient from serious diseases.
- **EXPLAIN** the costs of getting the disease, including severe health effects.

## Use motivational interviewing techniques

- Be empathetic, curious, and thank the patient for sharing concerns. Don't debate, just relate.
- Be sensitive to cultural and family circumstances that influence vaccine perspectives.
- Ask permission to discuss vaccines.
- Use open-ended questions, affirm positive actions, reflect what you hear, ask permission to share more information, and support the patient's autonomy.
- Connect to the patient's values and focus on shared goals.

### 3 Respond (*continued*)



It makes sense that you have questions about your baby's health and safety. I know that we both want the very best for your baby, **OR**  
Sounds like you're feeling unsure. Tell me more about what you've been hearing about the vaccine, **OR**  
I also wondered about that. Here's what I learned after looking into it.

I REALLY don't want to get vaccinated.



Acknowledge and ask permission to learn more. Use the SHARE method and motivational interviewing to share additional information as needed (previous page). See page 3 for common questions and responses.



I'd like to learn more. Would you be willing to share your biggest concerns about the vaccine?

**Consider your patient's unique viewpoint.** They may have concerns related to vaccine safety, false information, or mistrust in the medical system and government due to racism and other forms of discrimination.

#### Reminders

- Your influence as a messenger matters. You are a trusted source of information.
- If you had similar questions, share your decision-making thought process.
- To facilitate trust, acknowledge uncertainty where it exists.
- Link vaccine acceptance to the patient's hopes and shared goals.

### 4 Follow-up: after addressing concerns, ask again about willingness to get vaccinated.

I would like to get vaccinated.



I'm glad we talked about this, and I appreciate that you shared your concerns with me today. Let's make a plan for getting your vaccines.

**Encourage an action step:** vaccinate same day or schedule vaccine appointment.

I REALLY don't want to get vaccinated. I don't want to talk about this anymore.



Respect the patient's wishes. Provide an opportunity to revisit the discussion and offer educational resources. Be prepared for the conversation to continue over multiple visits.



This is definitely your decision. When you're ready, we can talk more about this. In the meantime, if you have any questions at all, I am here for you **OR**  
Would it be helpful for me to provide more information about keeping you and your baby healthy?

**Provide information:** Point the patient to reputable websites and invite them to contact you with any questions or concerns. If the patient declines the RSV vaccine, remind them about RSV immunization for their baby.

#### Online resources for patients

- One Vax, Two Lives: [onevaxtwolives.com](http://onevaxtwolives.com)
- Vaccinate Your Family: [vaccinateyourfamily.org/which-vaccines-does-my-family-need/pregnancy](http://vaccinateyourfamily.org/which-vaccines-does-my-family-need/pregnancy).
- Washington State Department of Health: [doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/immunization/during-and-after-pregnancy/pregnancy-and-vaccinations-faq](http://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/immunization/during-and-after-pregnancy/pregnancy-and-vaccinations-faq)



### **Why is it important to get vaccinated during pregnancy?**

Vaccines protect both you and your baby. *During* pregnancy, you're more likely to get very sick because of changes to your lungs, heart, and immune system. Vaccines help shield you from severe illness. *After* birth, vaccines also protect your baby. When you get vaccinated while you're pregnant, you create antibodies and pass some of them to the baby. These antibodies give your baby short-term protection during the vulnerable first months of life when they are too young to be vaccinated.

### **Why should I get vaccinated during pregnancy if the vaccine doesn't completely prevent me from getting sick?**

I know it can be frustrating to still get sick after you've been vaccinated. But here's the good news: those vaccinations will still protect you and your baby. When you're vaccinated, you're more likely to only get a mild case instead of a serious one. And you're less likely to be hospitalized or die. A mild case means that the vaccine worked – it prevented a severe disease that could have caused a bad outcome.

### **Can't I just get vaccinated after my baby is born?**

That's a good question, and a lot of my patients wonder about that. Babies can't get their first whooping cough shot until they are 2 months old, and they have to wait until they are 6 months old for flu and COVID-19 shots. We vaccinate during pregnancy so that your baby can be protected from the moment they're born.

### **Are these diseases really that serious?**

Even healthy people can be hospitalized during pregnancy due to flu or COVID-19 complications. Pregnant people who get very sick with flu or COVID-19 may experience miscarriage, preterm birth, or stillbirth. After birth, flu, COVID-19, RSV, and whooping cough can be very severe, and even deadly, for babies.

### **Can I get some, but not all of the vaccines recommended during pregnancy?**

I strongly recommend whooping cough, flu, COVID-19, and RSV immunizations for you and all of my pregnant patients. Vaccines are one of the best tools that we have to keep you and your baby healthy. That said, like all medical decisions, the final decision is yours.

### **Is it safe to get vaccines during pregnancy?**

Yes, vaccines are safe during pregnancy, and they are important for protecting your baby from serious diseases after they are born. Vaccines are rigorously tested before use. Once in use, they are closely monitored. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends whooping cough (Tdap), flu, COVID-19, and RSV immunizations during pregnancy. There is no evidence that vaccines during pregnancy negatively affect you or your baby during pregnancy, and there's no evidence that they affect your fertility.

### **I'm planning to breastfeed my baby. Do I really need to get vaccinated too?**

Breastmilk can protect infants from many infections by passing protective antibodies from the parent to the baby. However, there's still more we need to learn about how much protection breastmilk offers. Breastmilk isn't a substitute for vaccination.

### **I've been mistreated by doctors because of racism. Why should I trust your recommendation?**

Your experience sounds frustrating and hurtful. There's no place for discrimination in healthcare, and I'm so sorry you've gone through that. *After listening and further exploring the patient's concerns:* I think of trust as something I need to earn from you over time. I can tell you that I recommend vaccines because I've looked carefully at the evidence and feel confident that vaccines are the safest, most effective way to protect my patients from these diseases. Vaccination is what I'd chose for my own child. That said, the decision is completely yours. My priority is making sure that you and your baby stay healthy and feel supported.

### **There is so much conflicting information out there about vaccine safety. How can I tell what's accurate?**

There is lots of conflicting information online, especially on social media. You can always come to me or another provider in our office with questions about vaccines. My job is to help you make decisions based on the best available evidence. You can also look at websites from trusted organizations like One Vax, Two Lives ([onevaxtwolives.com](https://onevaxtwolives.com)), Vaccinate Your Family ([bit.ly/4jjDcBn](https://bit.ly/4jjDcBn)), and the Washington State Department of Health ([bit.ly/4dmLf4R](https://bit.ly/4dmLf4R)).

#### **Sources**

WADOH - Provider Discussion Guide: [bit.ly/4lY4561](https://bit.ly/4lY4561)  
CDC Healthcare Provider Conversation Tips: [bit.ly/43eLuuZ](https://bit.ly/43eLuuZ)  
CDC Pregnancy and Vaccines: [cdc.gov/vaccines-pregnancy](https://cdc.gov/vaccines-pregnancy)  
One Vax, Two Lives: [onevaxtwolives.com](https://onevaxtwolives.com)

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