



Moving to COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance

The following evidence-based patient-centered communication approaches build trust, promote strong clinician-patient relationships, and support engagement in self-care.

Core Principles of Veteran-Centered Communication

- Emphasize and support the patient's central role in managing their health
- Honor patient preferences for involvement in care and decision making
- Apply Motivational Interviewing (MI) Spirit: **PACE**
 - **P**artnership – embrace a collaborative, non-coercive approach
 - **A**cceptance – respect autonomy, without judgement
 - **C**ompassion – actively promote the patient's welfare, with empathy
 - **E**voking – seek to understand; tap into the patient's motivation; ask more than tell

Key Patient-Centered Communication Strategies to Support Behavior Change

1. Ask permission to discuss the topic
2. Explore patient's understanding, beliefs, experience and readiness
3. Support and affirm interest, benefits, past success; respond to concerns with empathy
4. Share information (with permission) and check for understanding,
5. Confirm next steps and plans, including follow-up

Application to COVID-19 Vaccine Acceptance

1. Ask Permission to discuss COVID-19 vaccination

- ♦ *May I talk with you about the COVID-19 vaccine(s)?*
 - **If yes, continue to Step 2.**
 - **If no,** you can say, *I am committed to helping patients stay well and avoid getting the coronavirus. I am here to support you and can help you get a COVID-19 vaccine when you are ready.*

2. Explore readiness and experience (ask **ANY** of the following questions):

- ♦ *What do you know about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine?*
- ♦ *What are you currently doing to protect yourself and your family against COVID-19? Flu?*
- ♦ *What is your understanding about YOUR risks of getting COVID-19?*
- ♦ *What have you been doing to help you (and your family, friends) avoid getting infected with the coronavirus?*
- ♦ *How important is it to you to avoid getting infected with the coronavirus? What makes it important? What would it take to make it even more important?*
- ♦ *What would you need to know to feel more confident about accepting the vaccine?*



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3. **Support and Affirm** ANY interest, benefits, current/past success; **respond to concerns with empathy**

- ♦ *I'm glad to hear that you have been taking steps to protect yourself and others from getting COVID-19.*
- ♦ *It's good that you have chosen to be vaccinated for flu in the past.*
- ♦ *It's great that you have taken other steps to stay healthy during this pandemic.*
- ♦ *So, you are open to learning more about the vaccine so you can share this information with your family.*

If specific concerns are raised: *I hear your concerns and can appreciate how that can make it harder to have trust in the vaccine.*

NOTE – If the patient spontaneously expresses readiness to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, move directly to Step 5.

4. **Share Information** (with permission)

- ♦ **Ask permission to share information about COVID-19 vaccines**
 - *May I share some information about the COVID-19 vaccines?*
- ♦ **If yes, share information about the potential benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine (supplement with handout, if available):**
 - *The risk of having a severe case of COVID-19 is greater for individuals with chronic conditions and those who are 65 or older.*
 - **COVID-19 vaccines work. (Cite data from trials)**
 - **Reduced risk of getting infected with the coronavirus**
 - **Reduced risk of having complications, hospitalization, long-term effects**
 - **Reduced likelihood you will spread infection to others**
 - *It is critically important for everyone to do their part to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others*
 - *When applicable - I appreciate all you are already doing to both stay safe and protect others from getting infected with the coronavirus.*

Bottom Line: *Vaccination with a COVID-19 vaccine, along with other methods (like wearing masks, physical distancing, washing hands) provides protection against getting or transmitting the virus.*

5. **Confirm Next Steps**

- ♦ Would you like to get the vaccine today (or when it can be arranged)?
 - If yes, share information about options and arrange vaccination
- ♦ **If Veteran declines vaccination, do ANY of the following:**
 - Ask if there is any other information they would like to receive.
 - Assure them we will provide vaccination later if now is not the right time. Let the patient know, *"We are ready to help you when you are ready."*
 - Let the patient know you will ask about their interest in vaccination at a subsequent visit, and the team will be happy to help them get it at any point.