

A campaign to increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures



General Audience Toolkit

HHS COVID-19 Public Education Campaign

This toolkit is for partner organizations to communicate directly with general audiences.



Toolkits User Guide

Introduction

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services COVID-19 public education campaign is a national initiative to increase public confidence in and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines while reinforcing basic prevention measures such as mask wearing and social distancing.

To achieve these goals, tailored toolkits were developed with all the information and materials you need to help share the campaign messages in your community. Thanks to partners like you, science-based information can be widely shared to benefit the most people possible.

Through a nationwide network of trusted messengers and consistent, fact-based public health messaging, these efforts help the public make informed decisions about their health and COVID-19, including steps they can take to protect themselves and their communities.

Toolkit Contents [Available in English and Spanish]

- **How to Communicate With Different Audiences:** Facts on COVID-19's impact; talking points on the importance of vaccination, vaccine safety, and other preventive measures.
- **Key Things to Know** Information on the most important things you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccines.
- **FAQs:** Comprehensive list of questions and answers related to vaccine safety, effectiveness, side effects, availability, and cost.
- **Social Media:** Sample Facebook and Twitter messages and images to share.
- **Talking About COVID-19 Vaccines With Family and Friends.** Tips on how to have open and helpful conversations about COVID-19 with people you care about.
- **Quick Tips for Partners:** Ideas on the various communication tactics you can use to amplify the campaign messages among members of your community.
- **What Fully Vaccinated People Need to Know:** Recommendations on what people who have been fully vaccinated can start doing, and things they need to continue to do to protect themselves and others.

For updates and other material resources, visit [WeCanDoThis.HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/we-cannot-do-this)





Communicating with General Audiences

Impact of COVID-19

- There have been more than 29 million known cases and over 534,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States, as of March 18 ([CDC, 2021](#)).
- A [February 2021 survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation](#) found:
 - 55% of American adults reported that they have received at least one dose of the vaccine (18%) or would get the vaccine as soon as they can (37%). The “wait and see” group decreased to 22% and those who reported that will only get the vaccine when it is required for work, school, etc. remained stable at around 7% of the population. The percent of people who said that they will never get vaccinated remained around 15%.
 - 53% of residents in rural regions reported that they have already received the vaccine or would get it as soon as possible, 19% wanted to “wait and see,” 4% would only get vaccinated if it were required of them, and 24% indicated they would not get the vaccine.
 - 55% of people who live in urban regions reported that they have already received the vaccine or would get it as soon as possible, 24% wanted to “wait and see,” 8% would only get vaccinated if it were required of them, and 13% indicated they would not get the vaccine.
- A recent study found that essential workers, most of whom are exposed to the public because their jobs cannot be done from home, are at higher risk for COVID-19 ([Selden & Berdahl, 2020](#)).
- Rural non-metropolitan residents have a higher prevalence of underlying medical conditions that may result in more serious cases of COVID-19 than do residents of large central metro regions ([CDC, July 2020](#)).
- The cumulative COVID-19 death rate in non-metropolitan counties is 14% higher than metropolitan counties (177 per 100,000 population vs. 155 per 100,000 population) ([CDC, March 2021](#)).
- Multiple surveys identify concern about possible side effects and vaccine safety as among the top reasons for waiting to get a vaccine within all populations ([U.S. Census Bureau, February 2021](#)).

Talking Points

- Getting vaccinated will mean spending more time with loved ones and engaging with your community.
- All the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. are safe. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines will continue to undergo extensive safety monitoring. CDC recommends getting the vaccine as soon as you are eligible.
- All of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing severe disease and were nearly 100% effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19 in clinical trials.
- COVID-19 spreads most commonly between people who are in close contact with one another. To protect yourself and your loved ones, wear a mask over your nose and mouth in public, stay at least 6 feet away (which is about 2 arm lengths) from people who don't live in your household, and avoid crowds.
- COVID-19 vaccines can cause side effects in some people, but serious side effects are extremely rare. Most side effects go away on their own in a few days. The most common side effect is a sore arm at the injection site.
- Safe COVID vaccines were developed quickly through use of a century of vaccine experience; technology that was new to vaccines but had been studied for two decades; a prototype coronavirus vaccine already in development at NIH; and tens of thousands of volunteers for clinical trials that enabled rapid accumulation of data on safety and effectiveness. Simultaneous vaccine production and analysis of testing data also allowed vaccines to be shipped within days of FDA authorization.
- The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States.

Messages/Tone Resonating with General Audiences

- Use credible, science-based information.
- Acknowledge that it's normal for people to have questions about the vaccines and that their questions matter.
- Remind people that vaccines are another tool in the toolkit to protect themselves and loved ones.



Key Things to Know About COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccines are safe

All authorized COVID-19 vaccines meet FDA's rigorous standards for safety and effectiveness. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines. These vaccines will continue undergoing the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history to make sure that they are safe. [Learn more.](#)

COVID-19 vaccines cannot make you sick with COVID-19

None of the vaccines being used or tested in the United States contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that they cannot make you sick with COVID-19. [Learn more.](#)

COVID-19 vaccines are effective

Studies showed that COVID-19 vaccines were effective at keeping people from getting COVID-19 and from getting seriously ill even if they got COVID-19. [Learn more.](#)

COVID-19 virus variants and vaccines

Scientists are studying different forms, or variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 to see if the vaccines will work against them. Current data suggest that COVID-19 vaccines authorized and recommended for use in the United States offer protection against most variants. For this reason, COVID-19 vaccines are an essential tool to protect people against COVID-19, including illness caused by the new variants. CDC will continue to monitor the impact these new variants may have on how well the vaccines work. [Learn more.](#)

COVID-19 vaccines are here

The vaccines are available now and as supply increases, more people will be able to receive a vaccine. [Learn more.](#)

COVID-19 vaccines are free

The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States. [Learn more.](#)



Wear a mask after getting the vaccine

After you've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you should keep taking precautions in public places like wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces until we know more. We're still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19.

If you've been fully vaccinated:

- You can gather indoors with fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- You can gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

You do need to wear a mask in public places, when visiting people from multiple households, or when around anyone with an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. [Learn more.](#)



Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19

VACCINE SAFETY

Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

COVID-19 can cause serious illness or even death. There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. And if you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you, putting their lives at risk. A COVID-19 vaccine greatly reduces the risk that you will develop COVID-19. In clinical trials, COVID-19 vaccines have been highly effective at preventing severe cases of COVID-19 that require hospital care or cause death.

Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes! COVID-19 vaccines being used in the United States meet FDA's rigorous standards for safety and effectiveness. Millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in the United States since December 14, 2020, and all COVID vaccines being used here will continue to be monitored for safety.

How can COVID-19 vaccines be safe since they were developed so fast?

Safe COVID vaccines were developed quickly through use of a century of vaccine experience; technology that was new to vaccines but had been studied for two decades; a prototype coronavirus vaccine already in development at NIH; and tens of thousands of volunteers for clinical trials that enabled rapid accumulation of data on safety and effectiveness. Simultaneous vaccine production and analysis of testing data also allowed vaccines to be shipped within days of FDA authorization.

Will the shot hurt or make me sick?

No. Some people might get sore muscles, feel tired, or have mild fever after getting the vaccine, but most people report only a sore arm where they got the shot. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will go away on their own in a few days. If you have any concerns, call your doctor or nurse.

Why are people having allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine?

A few people have had allergic reactions called anaphylaxis after getting a COVID-19 vaccine but were treated and have recovered. Your doctor can help you decide if it is safe for you to be vaccinated.

Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the COVID-19 vaccines in use or being tested in the United States because none of them contains the live virus that causes the disease.

Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I would like to have a baby one day?

Yes. People who want to get pregnant in the future can receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Experts believe that COVID-19 vaccines are unlikely to pose a risk to a person trying to become pregnant in the short or long term.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people who are pregnant?

Yes. If you are pregnant, you may choose to be vaccinated when it's available to you. There is currently no evidence that antibodies formed from COVID-19 vaccination cause any problem with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta.

People who are trying to become pregnant now or who plan to try in the future may receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them. There is no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. There is no routine recommendation for taking a pregnancy test before you get a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have questions about getting vaccinated, talking with a healthcare provider may help you make an informed decision.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people with certain underlying medical conditions?

COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to most people with underlying medical conditions once vaccine is available to them. If you have questions about getting COVID-19 vaccine, you should talk to your healthcare providers for advice. Inform your vaccination provider about all your allergies and health conditions.

VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

Vaccines train our immune system to recognize the COVID virus and make cells to fight the virus. With vaccines, we can build immunity to a disease without getting the disease.

How long do COVID-19 vaccines last?

We don't know right now how long COVID-19 vaccines protect people, but clinical trials are investigating this. What we do know is that among people who were vaccinated in clinical trials of the vaccines now available, the vaccines were highly effective at preventing severe cases of COVID that required hospital care or caused death. In these trials, vaccines were up to 94% effective in protecting volunteers from getting COVID-19 at all compared to people who received a placebo.

Do I need to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I've already had COVID-19?

Yes. Scientists do not yet know how long natural antibodies in people who have had COVID-19 will protect them from being re-infected.

Will the COVID-19 vaccine prevent me from infecting others?

COVID-19 vaccines reduce the likelihood that you will develop and be able to spread COVID-19. A growing body of evidence shows that the risk of vaccinated people getting and spreading the virus to others is low, but ongoing studies are further analyzing this question.

Do the vaccines work on the new COVID variants?

Scientists continue to study different forms, or variants, of the virus that causes COVID-19 to see if the vaccines will work against them. Current data suggest that COVID-19 vaccines authorized and recommended for use in the United States offer protection against most variants. For this reason, COVID-19 vaccines are an essential tool to protect people against COVID-19, including illness caused by the new variants. CDC will continue to monitor the impact these new variants may have on how well the vaccines work.

VACCINE AVAILABILITY

When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The vaccines are available now and as supply increases, more people will be able to receive a vaccine.

How much will the COVID-19 vaccine cost?

The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States.

Do I need to wear a mask after getting the vaccine?

After you've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you should keep taking precautions in public places like wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces until we know more. We're still learning how vaccines will affect the spread of COVID-19.

If you've been fully vaccinated, you do not need to wear a mask when:


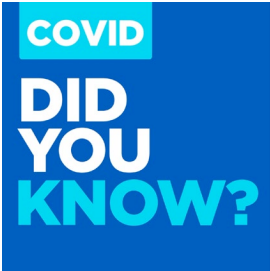
- You gather indoors with fully vaccinated people
- You gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household unless any of those people or anyone they live with has an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

You do need to wear a mask in public places, when visiting people from multiple households, or when around anyone with an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

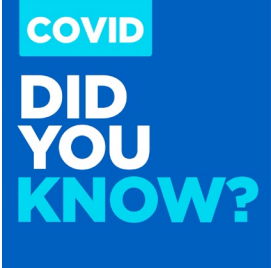




Social Media Messages: COVID-19 Vaccinations


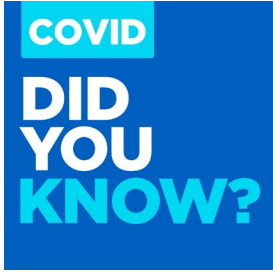
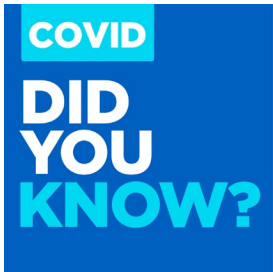
Facebook Sample Messages

<p>How do COVID-19 vaccines work? COVID-19 vaccines teach our bodies to fight the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to get the illness. Learn more: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: COVID-19 vaccines teach your body to recognize and fight the COVID virus.</p>
<p>The COVID-19 vaccines in use or in testing in the United States cannot give you COVID-19 because they do not use the live virus that causes COVID-19. You may have side effects like a sore arm or fever after you get a vaccine. This is normal and a sign that your immune system is learning how to recognize and fight the COVID-19 virus. Get the facts: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/facts.html</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the virus that causes COVID, so the vaccines cannot make you sick with COVID.</p>



<p>Did you know? Before any vaccine can be used in the U.S., it must meet strict standards for both safety and effectiveness. Get the facts about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: All COVID vaccines meet strict FDA standards for safety and effectiveness.</p>
<p>Are you concerned about the side effects, you may experience after getting a COVID-19 vaccine? Side effects are normal signs that your body is building protection. While some people may have no side effects, others have common side effects like a sore arm or flu-like symptoms. Side effects usually go away in a few days. Watch this video to learn more: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: Worried about COVID vaccine side effects? The most common side effect of a COVID-19 vaccine is sore arm for a few days.</p>
<p>Fact: Your best protection from COVID-19 is a combination of getting a COVID-19 vaccine, wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, avoiding crowds, and washing your hands often. No one tool alone is going to stop the pandemic. Learn more: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: What's the best protection from COVID-19? Getting a vaccine + following CDC advice = the best protection against COVID!</p>

Twitter Samples Messages

<p>Did you know that COVID-19 vaccines teach our bodies to fight the virus that causes COVID-19 without us having to get the illness? Get the facts: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/different-vaccines/how-they-work.html</p> <p>#WeCanDoThis</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: COVID-19 vaccines teach your body to recognize and fight the COVID virus.</p>
<p>#COVID19 vaccines in use or in testing in the US cannot give you COVID. Side effects are normal and mean that your immune system is learning to fight the virus. More at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/vaccine-myths.html</p> <p>#WeCanDoThis</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the virus that causes COVID, so the vaccines cannot make you sick with COVID.</p>
<p>Did you know that safety is a top priority for #COVID19 vaccines? All vaccines must meet strict standards for safety before they can be used in the U.S. Get the facts: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety.html</p> <p>#WeCanDoThis</p>	 <p>Download the video.</p> <p>Text: All COVID vaccines meet strict FDA standards for safety and effectiveness.</p>

Did you know that side effects after getting a #COVID19 vaccine are normal signs your body is building protection? If you have side effects, they usually go away in a few days. Learn more:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/expect/after.html>

#WeCanDoThis

**WORRIED
ABOUT
COVID
VACCINE
SIDE
EFFECTS?**

[Download the video.](#)

Text: Worried about COVID vaccine side effects? The most common side effect of a COVID-19 vaccine is sore arm for a few days.

Fact: Getting a #COVID19 vaccine, wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet away from others, and washing your hands are all needed to stop the pandemic. Get the facts at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>

#WeCanDoThis

**WHAT'S THE
BEST
PROTECTION
FROM
COVID-19?**

[Download the video.](#)

Text: What's the best protection from COVID-19? Getting a vaccine + following CDC advice = the best protection against COVID!



How to Talk About COVID-19 Vaccines With Friends and Family

Listen to their questions with empathy

COVID-19 vaccines are new, and it's normal for people to have questions about them. The sheer amount of information—and misinformation—about COVID-19 vaccines can be overwhelming to anyone. You can help by listening without judgment and identifying the root of their concerns.

Acknowledge their emotions so they know they have been heard. For example, you can say, "It sounds like you are stressed at work and home, and concerns about the vaccine are another source of stress. That's really tough."

Ask open-ended questions to explore their concerns

Open-ended questions are meant to elicit more than a yes-or-no answer. Asking open-ended questions can help you understand what your friend or family member is worried about, where they learned any troubling information, and what they have done to get answers to their questions. For example, you can ask, "How did watching that news report make you feel? What did you do next?"

Do not be judgmental and respectfully ask questions that help you understand their concerns. For example, avoid things like, "That's a silly concern," or "Why would you be worried about that?"

Ask permission to share information

Once you understand your friend or family member's question or concern, ask if you can provide some information, tell them where you get information you trust and be careful not to push information on them. You can find answers to common questions from reputable sources, including CDC.gov, the local health department website, or other trusted sources such as their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. Sometimes, sharing quick, accurate answers to common concerns your family or friends might have can go a long way toward moving someone from worry to confidence. If you don't know the answer to their questions, consider offering to help look for information.

Help them find their own reason to get vaccinated

Everyone who chooses to get vaccinated does it for a reason—to protect their family, to protect their children, to be less anxious, to visit their parents, or to get back to activities like seeing friends, resuming work, or returning to school. After addressing concerns with empathy, respect and facts, you can steer the conversation from “why not” to the important reasons that matter to them—their “why.” You may choose to share your reasons for getting vaccinated or discuss common goals you may have, like visiting with each other safely. The reasons that someone may choose to get vaccinated will always be those that are most compelling to them personally.

Help make their vaccination happen

Once someone decides on their “why,” help them make a commitment to get vaccinated. Help make the path to vaccination shorter, easier, and less stressful for them. Offer to help your family member or friend make a vaccination appointment at a location nearby and, if needed, go with them to the appointment. Offer to help with transportation or to babysit if they need childcare. Remember, every person who chooses to get vaccinated brings us all a step closer to moving past the COVID-19 pandemic. As a trusted messenger to your family and friends, you can play a role in their decision to vaccinate.



Tips to Amplify *We Can Do This* Resources



EMAIL DISTRIBUTION

Email your network and share the latest campaign messaging and resources, be sure to include a clear call to action.



E-NEWSLETTER

Highlight campaign resources and information in a short blurb in your e-newsletters.



SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

Share the campaign ready-made social media graphics, messages, and videos with your stakeholders and encourage them to re-post.



WEBSITE

Feature campaign resources on your website and encourage readers to use and share COVID-19 information.



WEBINAR OR OTHER VIRTUAL EVENT

Showcase campaign materials and host a discussion with your community about COVID-19 prevention.



TEXT MESSAGES

Share messages with your stakeholders with a link to campaign resources.



BLOG POST

Publish an article on how to use campaign resources within your community.





What Fully Vaccinated People Need to Know

Once someone is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, they can start to do some things that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic.

When is Someone Fully Vaccinated?

- 2 weeks after their second dose in a 2-dose series, like the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or

Fully Vaccinated People Can:

- Gather indoors with other fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask.
- Gather indoors with unvaccinated people from one other household (for example, visiting with relatives who all live together) without masks, unless any of those people or anyone they live with has [an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#).
- If they have been around someone who has COVID-19, they do not need to stay away from others or get tested unless they have symptoms.
 - However, if they live in a group setting (like a correctional or detention facility or group home) and are around someone who has COVID-19, they should still stay away from others for 14 days and get tested, even if they don't have symptoms.

Fully Vaccinated People Should Continue To:

- Take steps [to protect themselves and others](#) in many situations, like wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart from others, and avoiding crowds and poorly ventilated spaces. Precautions should be taken whenever they are:
 - In public
 - Gathering with unvaccinated people from more than one other household
 - Visiting with an unvaccinated person who is at [increased risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19](#) or who lives with a person at increased risk

- Avoid medium or large-sized gatherings.
- Delay domestic and international travel. If they do travel, they still need to follow CDC [requirements and recommendations](#).
- Watch out [for symptoms of COVID-19](#), especially if they've been around someone who is sick. If they have symptoms of COVID-19, they should get tested and stay home and away from others.
- Follow guidance at their workplace.

Public health officials continue to update recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people. For the latest guidance, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>