

A Shot at Good Health – Conversation Guide



Discussing sensitive topics with another person is sometimes hard. If a person thinks or believes something, s/he may feel threatened when presented with information that challenges that belief.

Some general tips for talking about vaccinations include

- Do not laugh, make fun, or minimize concerns, no matter how trivial they may seem.
- Personal recommendations, stories, and experiences can be powerful motivators.
- Use “I” statements rather than “you” statements to convey your message.

An “I” message is intended to represent your view from your own perspective – it is not intended to blame or threaten. An “I” message is intended to keep a

conversation as positive as possible. As an example, note the difference between these two sentences

1. *You need to get your vaccinations – they’re very important for your health.*
2. *I got my vaccinations because I think they’re important for my health and I encourage others to do the same.*

Both sentences basically convey the same message but the one that begins “you” could be perceived as accusing the other person of not being concerned with her/his health.

The following talking points are intended to help address some common issues surrounding vaccination in a non-threatening way.

Situation	Talking Points to Consider	Example Statements
If you are talking with someone who thinks vaccines do not work or cannot be trusted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the risk of not getting the vaccine. • Share your own positive experience of being vaccinated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I got my vaccinations so I could be around my new grandchild.</i> • <i>I talked to my health provider about things I have heard from others and read on Facebook and made the decision to get vaccinated with her/his input.</i> • <i>I was scared. I was not sure what to do. But what scared me more than getting the shot was getting the illness.</i>

<p>If you are talking with someone who thinks they are healthy and do not need vaccinations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind that even people who live healthy lifestyles may be at risk – for example, the virus that causes Shingles may be dormant in the body since childhood. • Share that just like you take control of your health by eating right and getting plenty of physical activity, you can take control by getting a vaccine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I didn't know adults needed vaccination updates. But I talked to my health provider and s/he told me the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has vaccination guidelines for people of all ages.</i> • <i>I walk regularly and try to eat right but I didn't realize our immune system slows down as we get older. So even though I'm living a healthy lifestyle, I may be more at risk from infections.</i>
<p>If you are talking with someone who thinks vaccines will give them the illness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that there may be some temporary side-effects or unpleasant feelings but these will subside. • Remind that this momentary “blip” is better than getting the illness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I talked to my health provider about this and s/he said that sometimes a vaccination can cause some funny feelings; but, those funny feelings show that my immune system is jumping into action...just like it's supposed to.</i>
<p>If you are talking with someone who thinks vaccines may interfere with their medications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage to discuss concerns with their health provider or pharmacist. • Remind that the health provider is not going to recommend something that is not relatively safe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I talked to my health provider about my concerns and s/he is going to review my medications and any other research/guidance about the vaccine to make sure there are no interactions.</i>
<p>If you are talking with someone who thinks they cannot afford to get vaccinated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind that Medicare Parts B and D cover most recommended vaccinations for adults over age 65. • Encourage to talk to doctor, pharmacist, or county/municipal health department about assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I told my health provider that cost was a barrier to getting vaccinated and s/he helped find some programs that would allow me to get vaccinated at little or no cost.</i> • <i>I talked to one of the Benefits Counselors at the Area Agency on Aging who knew of some resources to help with payment.</i> • <i>I decided investing in the vaccination was probably less expensive than getting the illness.</i>