

Vaccine Hesitancy

Understanding and Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy During COVID-19

With the need to manage both influenza and COVID-19, the heightened focus around vaccination presents an opportunity for pharmacists to help combat vaccine hesitancy. [Defined](#) by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “the delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite availability of vaccination services,” vaccine hesitancy has the potential to create significant public health problems, especially when our health care resources are being strained. This resource is meant to prepare pharmacists to engage in productive conversations with patients about immunizations. Pharmacists are trusted healthcare professionals. Your relationship with your patients is a powerful tool in addressing vaccine hesitancy of individuals and communities.

Quick Links

APhA’s [Helping Underserved Patients Overcome COVID-19 Vaccine Concerns](#) Webinar

APhA’s CPE Home Study: [Don’t Wait—Vaccinate! Strategies for Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy and Resistance](#)

CDC’s [Preparing for Questions Parents May Ask about Vaccines](#)

Immunization Action Coalition’s [Talking About Vaccines](#)

CDC’s [Busting Myths and Misconceptions about COVID-19 Vaccination](#)

CDC’s [Misconceptions about Seasonal Flu and Flu Vaccines](#)

Facts About Vaccine Hesitancy

- In January 2019, WHO declared that vaccine hesitancy was among the [top 10 threats](#) to global health—before the COVID-19 pandemic hit.
- A Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) [report](#) projects childhood vaccinations will decrease by 26% in the United States this year compared with 2019. (November 18, 2020)
- Only [49%](#) of Americans polled say they would get a COVID-19 vaccine, according to the Associated Press. (May 27, 2020)
- A [global study](#) found that 72% of participants would likely get the COVID-19 vaccine. Of the remaining 28%, 14% would refuse, while 14% would hesitate. (October 20, 2020)



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Basics of Vaccine Hesitancy

The reasoning behind vaccine hesitancy may not be apparent to health care providers, but to those who are wary of vaccines, their positions are obvious. The two models below describe factors that influence vaccine hesitancy.

The **3Cs Model**

- 1. Confidence** refers to the individual's trust in the effectiveness and safety of vaccines, the health care system, and the motivations of policy makers.
- 2. Complacency** refers to the lack of a perceived threat from vaccine-preventable diseases.
- 3. Convenience** refers to a range of contributing factors from health literacy to transportation access.

The **5As Model**

- 1. Access** is the ability of individuals to be reached by or reach vaccines.
- 2. Affordability** is the ability to afford vaccination.
- 3. Awareness** is the degree to which individuals understand the need for and availability of vaccines.
- 4. Acceptance** is the degree to which individuals accept, question, or refuse vaccination.
- 5. Activation** is the degree to which individuals are nudged toward vaccination uptake.

Tips for Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy

The following tips were derived from APhA's COVID-19 Open Forum Webinar, [Helping Underserved Patients Overcome COVID-19 Vaccine Concerns](#), featuring Sandra Leal, PharmD, MPH, FAPhA, CDCES, and Lakesha Butler, PharmD, BCPS.

- Know the Facts:** Pharmacists are key educators about vaccines and vaccine safety in the community. Since the COVID-19 vaccines are new, pharmacists should take time to learn the facts about the development of the vaccines and be prepared to answer questions about what to expect. APhA's library of resources covers [Immunizations During COVID-19](#) to bring you the latest information you need.
- Be Proactive:** Getting vaccinated may not be top of mind for your patients. As a pharmacy team, prioritize ways to bring awareness at the pharmacy and out in the community as well. Find ways to improve workflows and make vaccination convenient for patients. Hear about ways to engage technicians in vaccination in APhA's COVID-19 Open Forum Webinar.

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- ✓ **Build a [Trusting Relationship](#):** Be up front with patients about what to expect from vaccines. If side effects like injection site pain or body aches are common, it's important to be honest with patients to maintain trust.
- ✓ **Address Your Bias:** As health care providers, we understand the importance of getting a vaccine, but it's important to be engaged in the conversation and listen. Be aware of tone and conscious of nonverbal signals so that the patient feels comfortable discussing vaccination.
- ✓ **Ask About Barriers:** Use [open-ended questions](#) to learn important information from the patient.
 - a. "What are your concerns about vaccines?"
 - b. "How important do you think it is for your child to be protected from diseases that vaccines are designed to prevent?"
 - c. "How confident are you that vaccines are safe?"
 - d. "What have you heard about vaccines potentially posing a threat to your child's health?"
- ✓ **Share Personal Stories and Experiences:** Have someone take a picture of you getting a vaccine—be it your yearly flu vaccine or, eventually, the COVID-19 vaccine—and share this with your patients who may be hesitant. If you're comfortable sharing pictures of your family receiving a vaccine as well, this can be a powerful visual to help increase confidence in immunizations.
- ✓ **Circle Back:** If the patient decides not to be vaccinated, look for respectful ways to keep the dialogue going. Hesitant patients and caregivers will not want to change their decision if their health care provider minimizes their concerns instead of taking the time to truly address them, so it is critical that pharmacists show their patients that their concerns are heard and valid.

Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy in Racial or Ethnic Minority Populations

Increasing evidence shows that some racial and ethnic minority groups are being disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

- The CDC recently [found](#) that from late January to early October 2020, the United States had 299,000 more deaths than the typical number during the same period in previous years.
- At least two out of three excess deaths were from COVID-19, and the largest percentage increases were among Hispanic or Latino people and adults aged 25–44.
- Pew Research Center found that the people who are [most hesitant](#) to receive a COVID-19 vaccine are Black Americans.



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Addressing vaccine hesitancy in minority populations is critical to overcoming the health inequities COVID-19 has exacerbated. Below are some resources for providers and patients.

- Both [MedlinePlus](#) and [Health Information Translations](#) offer patient information and education resources in a number of different languages.
- [CDC Resources in Languages Other Than English](#)
- CDC's [Multi-Language Seasonal Flu Factsheets](#)
- CDC's COVID-19 [Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#)
- APhA's [Helping Underserved Patients Overcome COVID-19 Vaccine Concerns Webinar](#)
- APhA News Article: [COVID-19 vaccine faces Black communities' centuries-long mistrust of health care](#)

Additional Patient Resources

Ensure informational materials are readily accessible by your patients to increase awareness of the important role that vaccines play in public health.

- Immunization Action Coalition (IAC) library of patient [handouts](#)
- CDC resources:
 - A set of [resources](#) for Talking with Parents about Vaccines, including printable handouts and a video for parents featuring a Q&A with a pediatrician on vaccines.
 - A [toolkit](#) with materials for providers to use as part of their 2020–21 influenza vaccination campaign and helpful [infographics](#) to share
 - A general [resource center](#) with a large variety of media for providers to use in their practice and distribute to patients
 - A [guide](#) about how to recommend vaccines to patients from various demographics
 - A comprehensive collection of information about [COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- CMS's [webpage](#), which includes a section with resources translated into different languages



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