A campaign to increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures

**WE CAN DO THIS**

# 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**

# 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 United States 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 FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines are nearly 100% effective at preventing hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19.

- 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 and wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water aren't available.

- 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 National Institutes of Health; 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 vaccines free of charge to all people in the United States.

- Everyone age 12 and older can now get a COVID-19 vaccine. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:
    o Go to vaccines.gov
    o Text your ZIP code to 438829
    o Call 1-800-232-0233

# Messages/tone that resonate 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 can't 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

All FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines prevent nearly 100% of hospitalizations and deaths due to 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

Vaccines are here now and everyone age 12 and older can get them. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to vaccines.gov
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

## COVID-19 vaccines are free

The federal government is providing the vaccines free of charge to all people in the United States. Learn more.

# Once you're fully vaccinated

According to CDC, if you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose), you DON'T have to wear a mask indoors or outdoors in public (except in health care settings), and you DON'T have to keep your distance from other people.

Until you're fully vaccinated, you should continue to:

- Wear a mask when inside public places.
- Keep at least 6 feet part from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
- Avoid crowds.
- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.

Vaccinated and unvaccinated people must still follow federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial laws, rules, and regulations. That includes public transportation, airport/airplane, local business, and workplace guidance.

Also, if you have a medical condition or you take medicines that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected from COVID-19 even if you're fully vaccinated. Talk to your health care provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking precautions.

# 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's 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. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine greatly reduces the risk that you'll develop COVID- 19. The vaccines prevent nearly 100% of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19.

### Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes. All FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines available in the United States meet the 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 will continue to be monitored for safety.

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

Safe COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly through the use of a century of vaccine experience; technology that was new to vaccines but had been studied for two decades; a coronavirus vaccine already in development at the National Institutes of Health; 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's safe for you to be vaccinated.

# Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

You can't 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.

# Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe for people who are pregnant?

Yes. If you're pregnant, you may choose to be vaccinated when it's available to you. There's 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's no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. There's no routine recommendation for taking a pregnancy test before you get a COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have questions about getting vaccinated, talk with your health care provider.

## SAFETY IS THE TOP PRIORITY

The FDA and CDC have the highest standards when it comes to ensuring the safety and effectiveness of vaccines. Their process includes the following procedures:

- ✓ Scientists must first test vaccines extensively in medical studies to ensure they are safe and effective.
- ✓ Before the FDA authorizes a vaccine for use among the public, it ensures its safety by independently:
  - Reviewing the data from the medical studies, and
  - Inspecting the manufacturing facilities.
- ✓ Even after a vaccine has been authorized, the FDA and CDC closely monitor vaccine administration to identify even rare side effects or reactions.
- ✓ The FDA and CDC closely review any reports of side effects or reactions and share these facts with the public.

The extremely rare cases of blood clotting following Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine—just a small number of cases out of millions of vaccinations—show that the FDA and CDC's vaccine safety monitoring systems work and catch even the rarest of reactions.

A thorough investigation has confirmed that Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine is safe and effective.

And doctors have been notified and trained to understand the signs to watch for and the proper course of treatment if blood clots occur.

# Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe for people with certain underlying medical conditions?

COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to most people with underlying medical conditions. If you have questions about getting a COVID-19 vaccine, talk with your health care provider. Inform your vaccination provider about all your allergies and health conditions.

## Vaccine Effectiveness

# How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

Vaccines train your immune system to recognize and fight the virus that causes COVID-19. With vaccines, you can build immunity to a disease without getting the disease.

# How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?

All FDA-authorized COVID-19 vaccines prevent nearly 100% of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19.

# How long do COVID-19 vaccines last?

Scientists don't know right now how long COVID-19 vaccines protect people, but they are investigating this in medical studies.

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

Yes. Scientists don't yet know how long natural antibodies in people who have had COVID- 19 will be protect them from being reinfected.

# Will the COVID-19 vaccines prevent me from infecting others?

COVID-19 vaccines reduce the likelihood that you'll 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 a COVID-19 vaccine?

Vaccines are here now and everyone age 12 and older can get them. You have three ways to find vaccines near you:

- Go to [vaccines.gov](vaccines.gov)
- Text your ZIP code to 438829
- Call 1-800-232-0233

## How much will a COVID-19 vaccine cost?

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

## Do I need to wear a mask after getting vaccinated?

According to CDC, if you're fully vaccinated (2 weeks after your final dose), you DON'T have to wear a mask indoors or outdoors in public (except in health care settings), and you DON'T have to keep your distance from other people.

Until you're fully vaccinated, you should continue to:

- Wear a mask when inside public places.

- Keep at least 6 feet part from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.

- Avoid crowds.

- Avoid poorly ventilated spaces.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.

Vaccinated and unvaccinated people must still follow federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial laws, rules, and regulations. That includes public transportation, airport/airplane, local business, and workplace guidance.

Also, if you have a medical condition or you take medicines that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected from COVID-19 even if you're fully vaccinated. Talk to your health care provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking precautions.

# 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

COVID-19 vaccines work well to prevent you from getting and spreading COVID-19. They're nearly 100% effective at preventing hospitalization and death due to COVID-19.

Once you're fully vaccinated against COVID-19, you can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic.

## When is someone fully vaccinated?

You're fully vaccinated 2 weeks after your final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine:

- 2 weeks after your second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine.
- 2 weeks after your one and only shot of Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine.

## What can fully vaccinated people do?

- According to CDC, if you're fully vaccinated, you DON'T have to wear a mask indoors or outdoors in public (except in health care settings), and you DON'T have to keep your distance from other people.
- Vaccinated and unvaccinated people must still follow federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial laws, rules, and regulations. That includes public transportation, airport/airplane, local business, and workplace guidance.
- Also, if you have a medical condition or you take medicines that weaken your immune system, you may NOT be fully protected from COVID-19 even if you're fully vaccinated. Talk to your health care provider. Even after vaccination, you may need to continue taking precautions.

## What should unvaccinated people do to protect themselves and others from COVID-19?

Until you're fully vaccinated, you should continue to:

- Wear a mask when you're inside public places.
- Stay at least 6 feet (that's 2 arm lengths) apart from people who don't live with you and who may not be vaccinated.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated spaces.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol when soap and water aren't available.

Public health officials continue to update recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people. For the latest guidance, visit cdc.gov/coronavirus.