



NACHC COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT FOR HEALTH CENTER STAFF

Updated January 2022

INTRODUCTION

Serving more than 30 million Americans, community health centers continue to play a unique and critically important role in helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Health centers are urgently encouraging vaccinating their own staff and patients in communities across the United States.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and administration of the COVID-19 vaccine continues to evolve so has the information health centers use to help patients and staff protect themselves against the virus. NACHC has updated its *COVID-19 Communications Toolkit for Health Center Staff* to reflect the most recent development as of November 2021. Updates are now available for the following Toolkit contents:

- **KEY MESSAGES** (which can be tailored for use with specific populations)
- **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**
- **SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS AND IMAGES**; and
- **TEMPLATE MEDIA ADVISORIES**

NACHC will continue to monitor developments in COVID-19 vaccine administration and regularly update our COVID-19 Communications Toolkit for Health Center Staff to reflect these developments. For materials and graphics tailored for specific audiences, visit COVID-19 Vaccine Education Resources from Outside Organizations. For rapid-response messaging guidance on new questions related to COVID-19, check out the resources from the Public Health Communications Collaborative.

COVID-19 VACCINATION KEY MESSAGES FOR HEALTH CENTER STAFF TO USE IN COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS

OVERARCHING MESSAGE:

THE COVID-19 VACCINE IS THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR COMMUNITY AGAINST THE VIRUS. IF YOU ARE UNVACCINATED KNOW HOW YOU AND YOUR FAMILY CAN STAY SAFE AND HEALTHY.

5 MAIN MESSAGES:

1. The COVID-19 vaccine is most effective in preventing serious illness and death from the virus.

- The vaccine remains the best tool for preventing serious illness and death from COVID-19 and reducing the spread of the virus, including disease caused by Delta and other variants.
- Nearly all cases of severe illness, hospitalization, and death continue to occur among those not yet vaccinated.

- After a thorough review of safety data, the Food and Drug Administration's approval (FDA) granted the first COVID-19 vaccine full approval based on clinical testing. The FDA's approval provides even more evidence that the vaccines are safe.
- If you are fully vaccinated and become infected with the virus, the vaccine can protect you from becoming seriously ill.
- If you have any questions about the effectiveness of the vaccine, the most trusted source of information is your health care provider.

2. Additional doses of all three COVID-19 vaccines are now recommended, regardless of what vaccine you initially received.

- Booster doses are now recommended for all adults ages 18 years and older. People who received a Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine should get the booster at least five months after their second dose.
- If you who have received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, an additional vaccine is recommended for adults ages 18 years and older who were vaccinated two or more months ago.
- Teenagers aged 12 -17 who received the Pfizer vaccine are also now eligible to get a booster. They may only get the Pfizer vaccine booster.
- If you are eligible and are an adult 18 years and older, you may now choose which vaccine you receive as an additional dose.
- A "booster dose" is an additional dose of a vaccine that is given to someone who built enough protection after vaccination, but then that protection decreased over time.
- All three vaccines continue to protect against serious illness and death.
- Everyone's immunity decreases over time whether you were infected with the virus, or you received a vaccine to protect you from the virus.
- Booster doses are common for many vaccines. Doctors who developed the COVID-19 vaccines continue to closely watch for signs of decreasing immunity. They watch for how well the vaccines protect against new mutations of the virus, and how that data differs across age groups and risk factors.
- The FDA and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) continue work to understand how COVID-19 changes over time, and they will continue to monitor and make updates to the recommendations they publish to help people stay safe.

3. The COVID-19 vaccine is the best way for you to protect your children from more dangerous forms of the virus.

- The vaccine is now available for young children ages 5 -11 years old and all teens.
- The vaccine is over 90% effective in preventing COVID-19 in children ages 5 -11 years old.
- The vaccine is very safe to give to children. After getting the COVID-19 vaccine, children may have some side effects similar to adults and with other vaccines. These are normal signs that the body is building protection and will go away in a few days.
- You can protect your children from more contagious forms of the virus which can be serious in children leading to hospitalization and/or long-lasting COVID-19 symptoms.
- Vaccination can help children stay in school safely, reconnect with friends, and get the education they deserve.

- Like adults, children should continue to wear a mask in public indoor settings or when interacting in crowded areas, even outdoors, and when around people who don't live in their household.
- Talk to your health care provider on how you can best protect your children from COVID-19, their risks for getting the virus, and if they are able to get the vaccine.
- Children 6 months and older should receive the flu vaccine and other vaccines on their regular schedule as recommended by the CDC. It is safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine along with any other routine vaccine including the flu vaccine.
- Many kids are behind on their regular vaccinations due to missed checkups during the pandemic. Getting more than one vaccine per visit lets them catch up on vaccinations.

4. If you are unvaccinated, follow recommended steps to reduce your risk of getting the virus.

- If you are unvaccinated, talk with your health care provider to discuss ways to stay safe and healthy and to reduce your risk of getting COVID-19.
- Always follow the advice of your health care provider because there is a lot of misinformation which can put you at higher risk of becoming ill from the virus.
- If you are not fully vaccinated, you should wear a mask in indoor public places. If possible, maintain 6 feet of distance between you and people who do not live in your home.
- Do things to ensure you are staying safe:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick
 - Avoid crowds and spaces with poor ventilation
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - Monitor your health daily. Be alert for symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath.
- Get a flu shot or other vaccines you may need as soon as you can. You can get the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time.
- If you have a condition that prevents you from getting the vaccine at this point, it is recommended you get the vaccine as soon as you're medically able.

5. Following inaccurate information about COVID-19 and the vaccine can increase your risk of exposure to the virus.

- You need to be aware that there is a lot of misinformation shared on social media and on the Internet about COVID-19 and the vaccine.
- Stop and investigate the source of the information you read and trust and ask your health care provider about it.
- Community health centers have administered millions of vaccines and health center staff can help you find trusted information.

COVID-19 VACCINATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES FOR HEALTH CENTER STAFF TO USE IN COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS

Is the mRNA vaccine considered a vaccine?

Yes. mRNA vaccines, such as the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, still create an immune response inside your body, but they work a little differently than other vaccines. This type of vaccine is new, but research and development on it has been under way for decades. The mRNA vaccines do not contain any live virus. The COVID-19 vaccines work by teaching our immune system to recognize cells that do not belong there and to respond to get rid of them. When an immune response begins, antibodies are produced.

Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Yes. Based on data on the safety of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy, CDC recommends COVID-19 vaccination for all people who are pregnant, breastfeeding or trying to get pregnant now or in the future. Data show that pregnant and recently pregnant people are more likely to get severely ill if infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 compared with non-pregnant people, and the highly contagious Delta variant makes it even more important for eligible people to get vaccinated.

There is no evidence to show that getting a vaccine increases the risk of miscarriage. There is also no evidence that fertility problems are a side effect of any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines. There has been extensive safety monitoring of the COVID-19 vaccines, including analysis of vaccination during pregnancy.

Will getting a COVID-19 vaccine during pregnancy or while breastfeeding protect my baby from COVID-19?

Antibodies made after a pregnant person received an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine have been found in umbilical cord blood, which means that COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy might help protect babies against COVID-19. Recent reports have shown that breastfeeding people who have received mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have antibodies in their breast milk, which could help protect their babies.

Should people get a seasonal flu shot? Will the seasonal flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine interact in harmful ways?

It is more important than ever to protect against influenza, which, like COVID-19, is a respiratory illness. Vaccination for the flu is critical to help reduce the overall impact of respiratory illnesses on the general population and lower the resulting burden on the healthcare system during the pandemic. You can get the flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine at the same time.

Will getting a COVID-19 vaccine cause me to test positive for SARS-Co-2 virus?

No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines cause you to test positive for the virus.

If vaccines work, why do some vaccinated people get COVID-19?

COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing most infections. However, like other vaccines, they are not 100% effective. A vaccine breakthrough infection happens when a fully vaccinated person gets infected with SARS-Co-2. People with vaccine breakthrough infections may spread COVID-19 to others. Even if you are fully vaccinated, if you live in an area with high transmission of COVID-19, you – as well as your family and community – will be better protected if you wear a mask when you are in indoor public places. This is particularly important in cases where people do not develop enough immunity because they have or have had other medical conditions.

Who is eligible to receive a booster?

The COVID-19 vaccine is given in a series of doses. A booster is an additional dose of the vaccine. Additional doses are now recommended for all three available COVID-19 vaccines, regardless of what vaccine people received initially. An additional dose or “booster” is recommended for all adults 18 years and older who received their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least six months ago.

For people who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, an additional dose is recommended for adults ages 18 years and older who were vaccinated two or more months ago. Teenagers aged 12-17 who received the Pfizer vaccine are also now eligible to get a booster. They may only get the Pfizer vaccine booster.

If the vaccines are effective, why do I need more than one dose?

Vaccines are sometimes given in a series of doses to help develop the body’s immune response against the virus. All three vaccines, including the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, continue to protect against serious illness and death. Additional doses of the vaccine have been approved and these will be made available as soon as possible.

Why is there a lot of reporting of adverse reactions to the vaccine?

Anyone can submit a report to the CDC’s Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System known as VAERS. VAERS tracks all submitted information about adverse reactions. Adverse reactions are monitored closely. Some people may have mild side effects like soreness in the arm where the shot was given. This is an indication that the vaccine is working. These are normal and should go away in a few days. They are not adverse reactions.

Is it better to get natural immunity to COVID-19 rather than immunity from a vaccine?

No. While you may have some short-term antibody protection after recovering from COVID-19, we don’t know how long this protection lasts. Vaccination is the best protection, and it is safe. People who get COVID-19 can have serious illnesses, and some have debilitating symptoms that persist for months.

COVID-19 SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING

BOOSTER VACCINE FOR ALL ADULTS OVER 18 YEARS OLD AND ELIGIBLE TEENS AGES 12 AND OLDER

FACEBOOK

- Booster doses are now recommended, regardless of what vaccine you initially received. Learn more and check eligibility at [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]
- If you received the J&J vaccine at least two months ago, you are eligible for any of the three booster dose options now. Talk to your health care provider to learn more & visit [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]
- We encourage all adults who are eligible, to get their COVID-19 booster today. Learn more here: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]
- Let’s help keep our teens healthy and safe. Teens ages 12 and older who received the Pfizer vaccine can now get their COVID-19 booster today. Learn more here: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]

TWITTER

- Booster shots for all 3 #COVID19vaccines are now recommended for all adults. Talk to your health care provider & learn more here: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE] #ThisIsOurShot #VaccinesSaveLives

VACCINE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN FIVE YEARS AND OLDER

FACEBOOK

- COVID-19 vaccines are now available for kids five and older! Protect your kids & #StoptheSpread by getting them the COVID-19 vaccine. Got questions? Talk to your health care provider & visit [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]
- Kids get COVID-19, too, causing severe illness in some cases. Did you know that kids five and older can now get the COVID-19 vaccine? It is safe, effective, and can protect your kids from severe illness. Got questions? Talk to your health care provider & visit [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]
- Kids 5 and older are now eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine! Get your children vaccinated to protect them, help them stay safe at school, in social settings and with family and friends, and stop the spread of COVID-19. The vaccine is safe, effective & reduces the risk of serious illness. Learn more by talking with your health center provider or by visiting [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]

TWITTER

- Kids can get #COVID19 and easily spread it even if they don't have symptoms. Give your kids ages 5+ the protection they deserve. Got questions? Talk to your health care provider or visit: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE] #ThisIsOurShot #VaccinesSaveLives

GET FLU AND COVID VACCINE AT THE SAME TIME

FACEBOOK

- Flu season is here! Everyone 6 months & older should get a flu shot. Even better? Everyone 5 and older can get their flu shot & #COVID19vaccine at the same time. Both vaccines are safe, effective & protect you from a severe illness. Learn more and register for your vaccines today at [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]

TWITTER

- #Fluseason is here! Everyone 6 months and older should get a flu shot. If you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine or booster, it is safe to get both vaccines on the same day. Learn more by visiting [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]. #VaccinesSaveLives

STAYING SAFE IF UNVACCINATED

FACEBOOK

- If you are unvaccinated, you must take steps to ensure you and your loved ones are staying safe:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick
 - Avoid crowds and spaces with poor ventilation
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - Monitor your health daily. Be alert for symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breathFor more tips about how to stay safe, visit [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]

TWITTER

- If you're unvaccinated, it's very important you take steps to protect yourself and everyone around you. Talk to your healthcare center provider about how to protect yourself and keep your family safe. Learn more here: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE] #COVID19.

PREGNANCY AND COVID-19 VACCINES

FACEBOOK

- Pregnant women are at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Studies show that getting a COVID-19 vaccine offers protection for pregnant women and their babies.
- Talk to your health care provider today about getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Got questions? Learn the facts here: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]

TWITTER

- Did you know pregnant women can also get the #COVID19vaccine? The vaccine is safe & effective throughout pregnancy. Protect yourself and your baby from severe illness caused by COVID-19. Learn more: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE] #ThisIsOurShot.

VACCINE MISINFORMATION

FACEBOOK

- Is your COVID-19 information coming from a source you don't know? Inaccurate information about COVID-19 vaccines is spreading faster than the virus. You can help stop the spread of incorrect information by:
 - Fact-checking information
 - Only sharing content that you know is based on science
 - Speaking with medical professionals about COVID-19
- Got questions about COVID-19 vaccines? We are here to help. Talk to your health care provider about the facts & learn more at [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE]

TWITTER

- Misinformation is on the rise about COVID-19 vaccines. Trust your health care provider and talk to them about the science behind the vaccines. Learn more: [HEALTH CENTER WEBSITE] #ThisIsOurShot #VaccinesSaveLives.

COVID-19 VACCINATION TEMPLATE MEDIA ADVISORIES FOR USE BY HEALTH CENTER STAFF

PURPOSE AND SUGGESTED USE

Media advisories provide information to the media to generate coverage about an organization's milestones, news, events, or expert interviews. These can be distributed to a handful of local media organizations and do not need to have broad distribution as press releases. These advisories can also be posted on the health center's web pages and adapted for social media channels. The advisories are short and provide basic information about one topic.

If using these advisories for an event, email to media contacts 3-5 days in advance with a follow up the day prior to the event. Ideally send within the body of the email, rather than as an attachment.

COVID-19 VACCINE BOOSTER DOSES AVAILABLE

SUBJECT LINE: MEDIA ADVISORY [INSERT HEALTH CENTER NAME] TO OFFER BOOSTER VACCINES

WHAT: Local health center will host vaccination event/open hours/will make booster vaccines available

Booster vaccines are now available for people who received two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine and their second dose was five or more months prior. It is recommended for fully vaccinated adults 18 years and older. Teens ages 12-17 years old who received the Pfizer vaccine are eligible for a booster five months after receiving their second dose.

Adults who received the J&J vaccine at least 2 months ago, are eligible for an additional dose – they can choose any of the 3 COVID-19 vaccine boosters.

WHEN: Insert date if event/hours if ongoing open hours

WHERE: Insert location

WHY: Your local health center is the most trusted source for medical information and access to COVID-19 vaccines. The vaccine remains the best tool for preventing serious illness and death from COVID-19 and reducing the spread of the virus, including disease caused by Delta and other variants.

For more information contact: Insert contact information

SUBJECT LINE: MEDIA ADVISORY [INSERT HEALTH CENTER NAME] TO OFFER ADDITIONAL DOSE FOR J&J VACCINE RECIPIENTS

WHAT: Local health center will host vaccination event/open hours

Booster vaccines are now available. Adults who received the J&J vaccine at least 2 months ago, are eligible for an additional dose – they can choose any of the 3 COVID-19 vaccine boosters. People who are unsure what booster they need, are encouraged to talk to the health center staff during the event or open hours. [Health centers can include which vaccines are available.]

WHEN: Insert date if event/hours if ongoing open hours

WHERE: Insert location

WHY: Your local health center is the most trusted source for medical information and access to COVID-19 vaccines. Because immunity can decrease over time and illness can be caused by new variants of the virus, additional doses of the COVID-19 vaccine are necessary over time. Vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines are sometimes given in a series of doses to help develop immunity.

For more information contact: Insert contact information

COVID-19 VACCINE AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

SUBJECT LINE: MEDIA ADVISORY [INSERT HEALTH CENTER NAME] TO OFFER COVID-19 VACCINE TO CHILDREN 5 YEARS +

WHAT: Local health center will host vaccination event/open hours

Kids 5 years old and older are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccinating young children can help stop the spread of COVID-19. The vaccine is safe, effective and can protect children from severe illness. [Health centers can include which vaccines are available.]

WHEN: Insert date if event/hours if ongoing open hours

WHERE: Insert location

WHY: Your local health center is the most trusted source for medical information and access to COVID-19 vaccines. Parents can protect their children from more contagious forms of the virus such as Delta, which can be serious in children leading to hospitalization and/or long-lasting COVID-19 symptoms. Vaccination can help children stay in school safely, reconnect with friends, and get the education they deserve.

For more information contact: Insert contact information

FLU SEASON

SUBJECT LINE: MEDIA ADVISORY [INSERT HEALTH CENTER NAME] TO HOST FLU AND COVID-19 VACCINE CLINIC

WHAT: Flu and COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

Flu season is in full swing. If you have not received the flu vaccine, now is the time. Patients can receive the flu and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time. Both vaccines are safe, effective & protect from serious illness. Patients can make an appointment at (insert health center website), or patients can attend during the hours noted below with no appointment needed.

WHEN: Insert date if event/hours if ongoing open hours

WHERE: Insert location

WHY: Your local health center is the most trusted source for medical information and access to COVID-19 and flu vaccines. It is safe to get a COVID-19 vaccine along with any other routine vaccine including the flu vaccine. Adults and children 6 months and older should receive the flu vaccine and other vaccines on their regular schedule or should catch up if they are currently behind on their scheduled vaccines.

For more information contact: Insert contact information

SUBJECT LINE: MEDIA ADVISORY [INSERT HEALTH CENTER NAME] TO HOST FLU VACCINE CLINIC

WHAT: Flu Vaccine Clinic

Flu season is here and it is important to stay safe. If you have not received the flu vaccine, now is the time. Patients can receive the flu vaccine regardless of whether they have received the COVID-19 vaccine. Patients can make an appointment at (insert health center website), or patients can attend during the hours noted below with no appointment needed.

WHEN: Insert date if event/hours if ongoing open hours

WHERE: Insert location

WHY: Your local health center is the most trusted source for medical information and access to the flu vaccine. People who remain unvaccinated for COVID-19 should still get the flu vaccine and discuss with their health care provider steps they can take to ensure they are staying safe.

For more information contact: Insert contact information

References:

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

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness/why-measure-effectiveness/breakthrough-cases.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/vaccines/booster-shot.html>

<https://publichealthcollaborative.org/faq/#Vaccine-Booster-Doses>

<https://publichealthcollaborative.org/faq/>

<https://www.webmd.com/lung/coronavirus>

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