



What's on the Horizon for Public Health

How to Talk about COVID Vaccine with Friends and Family

Are you vaccinated against COVID-19 and have family or friends who have not yet made the decision to get vaccinated? Talking with them about the benefits of getting a COVID shot can be difficult. Sometimes the best approach is first to listen to identify their concerns. Ways to help open the discussion include listening with empathy, asking open ended questions to explore concerns, asking for permission to share information and helping them find their own reason to get vaccinated.

The COVID-19 vaccine is new and it's normal to have questions and concerns. The sheer amount of information and misinformation can be overwhelming for many. When having conversations about the COVID-19 vaccine, begin by listening with empathy. When listening without judgement, and acknowledging feelings, you can many time get to the root of concerns. When talking, ask open ended questions. Open ended questions usually get more than a simple yes or no answer, so you can better understand what they are worried about. Avoid saying things like "That's a silly concern," or "Why would you be worried about that?" Instead, 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 permission to share information. Once you understand the questions or concerns, ask if you can provide additional information. Tell them where you get information that you trust. If they agree, they will be more willing to listen instead of feeling like you're pushing unwanted information on them. You can find answers to common questions from reputable sources, including CDC.gov, the Minnesota Department of Health website, or other trusted sources such as doctors, nurses, or pharmacists. You can also visit our Horizon Public Health website.

Sometimes, sharing quick, accurate answers to common concerns goes a long way toward moving someone from worry to confidence. If you don't know the answers 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 so 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 and facts, you can steer the conversation from "why not" to the important reasons that matter to them, their "why."

The reasons that someone may choose to get vaccinated will always be those that are most compelling to them personally. Together you can share your reasons for choosing to be vaccinated, or discuss common goals you may have.

Help make their vaccination decision be more comfortable for them. When someone decides on their "why," help them make a commitment to get vaccinated. Offer to help them make a vaccination appointment and, if needed, go with them to the appointment. Offer to help remove barriers they may have such as transportation or 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. Call Horizon Public Health for additional questions or assistance at 800.450.4177 for more information.