



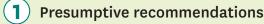
Proven Strategies Help Shorten Talks about the COVID-19 Vaccines

Dentists are an important part of a patient's overall health care, and that includes talking to patients about recommended vaccines. The following strategies and tips will help make it easier for you to discuss vaccines – especially the COVID-19 vaccines – with your patients.

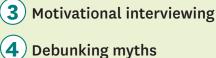
Evidence-based strategies have been used with positive results when talking to patients about vaccines. Once you learn how to use them, it takes four minutes or less of your time.

The table below shows the order of strategies to use based on the level of acceptance or hesitancy.

Accepting patients







Hesitant patients



Blanket recommendations

1. Start with a presumptive recommendation.

Announce that a COVID-19 vaccine is recommended instead of asking how a patient feels about receiving it.



"With COVID-19 continuing to be a big concern in our community, let's get you vaccinated as soon as you are eligible."

2. Follow with a strong blanket recommendation.

Sound matter-of-fact, confident. Recommend the COVID-19 vaccine the same way you would with any other form of dental treatment.



Example: "You need the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as you are eligible."



Be prepared for questions and reply with brief facts about the vaccine. Keep it simple.

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3. Change tactics to motivational interviewing.

Switch to motivational interviewing (MI) when a patient is not sure about the COVID-19 vaccine to reconnect with them. Leverage their basic motivation for a behavior.

MI has four principles: empathy, collaboration, evocation and support for autonomy. To help manage concerns, these principles include micro skills:

• Ruler

- Open-ended questions
- Elicit, provide, elicit (EPE)
- Affirmation Summaries



• Reflection

A patient comes in for an appointment. At the end of the visit, you offer a presumptive, strong blanket recommendation for the COVID-19 vaccine. Your patient is hesitant about the vaccine. You pivot to MI as follows:

Dentist asks	Patient replies
"I see. So, on a scale of one to 10, with one never getting the vaccine and 10 definitely getting it today, where are you at?" (Ruler)	"About a three."
"Okay, can you tell me more about why you are a three and not a one?" (Elicitation, Evocation)	"Well, I definitely don't want to get COVID-19. I'm open to the idea of the vaccine, but I'm scared it's not safe."
"Would you mind telling me what safety issues you are worried about?" (Open-ended question)	"I've heard that some people have had adverse reactions and it could make me really sick."
"There are many rumors about the COVID-19 vaccines on the internet. Severe adverse events from the COVID-19 vaccines are rare and more treatable compared to the adverse events from full-blown infection of the novel coronavirus."	
"The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and have been well studied. The vaccines are up to 95% effective at preventing COVID-19, and up to 100% effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19."	
"I think it's an important vaccine. I and my entire staff have received it."	
"That said, this is a decision only you can make. What do you think?" (Autonomy, EPE)	
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4. Debunk myths with brief facts.

Take the mystery out of it. Always state a myth is false before you talk about it. This removes the myth in a person's mind and creates a gap. It is vital you fill the gap with brief, simple facts.



Your next patient is a man who comes in for a visit. He is in a category eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Dentist asks	Patient replies
You give your presumptive, blanket recommendation.	<i>"My cousin told me I shouldn't get the COVID-19 vaccines because there are toxins in them."</i>
Summarize what you heard. Ask permission to make a recommendation.	
"So, you seem concerned about potential effects of the ingredients in the vaccines." (MI – reflection)	
"I get that – you want to make sure you only take things that are good for you. I've looked into this a great deal. Would it be okay to share what I've learned about the COVID-19 vaccines?" (MI – ask permission)	
Briefly share what you learned, then pivot to the importance of the vaccines.	
"It's actually a myth about the COVID-19 vaccines containing toxins." (Preceding explicit warning)	
"The ingredients in vaccines are in tiny quantities. Vaccines are made to be safe." (Alternative explanation)	
"I feel better knowing my patients get the vaccines they need. COVID-19 is serious. It can lead to hospitalization and possibly death." (Focus on core facts and positives of action)	
"That said, this is your decision. What do you	

think?" (MI – autonomy)



Residents can visit https://covid19.ca.gov/get-localinformation/for county- or city-specific COVID-19 vaccination locations and eligibility.