

COVID-19 Vaccination – Script to guide conversations with young people aged 16+

Enabling young people to have a conversation about vaccination is vital in promoting informed choice, understanding, and decision about vaccination.

Your role is to support discussion about vaccination.

Consent for vaccination will be the focus of a conversation between the young person and the person who gives the vaccine. The vaccination team will also check that there is no medical reason why the young person should not have the vaccination on that day, for example if it is too soon after their previous dose.

Hi, I'm interested in understanding your experience of COVID-19 and the attitude of young people to COVID-19 vaccination.

1. Tell me about your experience of living through COVID-19.

Prompts

- What word springs to mind when you hear COVID-19?
- What have been the greatest challenges for you during COVID-19 (over the past two years)?
- What are you looking forward to in life as COVID-19 restrictions are eased?

2. COVID-19 has caused different types of illness in different people. Tell me about your experience. Have you had COVID-19 or know anyone who has had COVID-19?

Prompts

- Tell me about it a little more
- Were you worried?
- That must have been very difficult/sad for you
- What have you learnt from this experience?

3. Tell me what you know about the COVID-19 vaccine?

Prompts

- Why the vaccine is important?
- What are the benefits of vaccine?
- Who can get vaccinated?
- Where you get it?
- When you get it?
- How many vaccines are needed?

4. Have you had your COVID-19 vaccine?

Prompts if yes

- When did you get it?
- Where did you get it?
- What were your reasons

Prompts if no

- Some people are worried about having the jab due to things they might have read or heard about it. What is stopping you from having the vaccine (may say: because I had COVID-19, I heard of someone who was ill after the vaccine; I don't like needles; I didn't have anyone to go with and didn't want to go alone)
- Are you aware that the COVID-19 vaccination works very well in helping prevent serious illness and stopping us from giving COVID-19 to family and friends?

Guidance notes

Vaccines

Vaccines are medicines which teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases.

Young people aged 16-17 years can get two doses of the Pfizer Biontech vaccine. The second dose is given 12 weeks following the first vaccine or if they have previously had COVID-19, whichever is later.

Why COVID-19 vaccine is important

Vaccination means that we can reduce the spread of the virus quickly and protect ourselves and those we love. It will also mean taking less time off from education and work, avoiding disruption to hobbies, social events, and plans to spend time with our friends and family, as well as protecting us from serious illness and even death. We need more people to get vaccinated so that way the spread of the disease is slowed down. It is important that everyone who can take the vaccine gets it as soon as possible.

Are the vaccines safe?

All COVID-19 vaccines have been very well tested before being licenced to use with people, including children and young people. The vaccine has gone through all the necessary safety procedures to be approved by the UK's independent medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Once a vaccine is in use, it must be continuously monitored to make sure it continues to be safe. Millions of people have already been vaccinated and most side effects are mostly minor, with serious side effects being extremely rare.

Because vaccines work by triggering your immune system to produce a reaction, you can have side effects after you receive the vaccine. Things like having a fever, or feeling achy, or getting a headache are common after receiving many vaccines and this is the same for the approved COVID-19 vaccines. Having these symptoms means that your immune system *is working as it should be*. Usually, these symptoms last a much shorter time than a real infection would (most are gone within 1–2 days). You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the vaccines. If you experience minor side effects after the vaccination, you can rest and take paracetamol (follow the dose advice in the packaging) to help you feel better.

The absence of serious side effects shows how safe and effective the vaccines are. Nothing in life can be guaranteed as being 100% safe and some people will feel a little out of sorts for a few hours or a day or so. Catching COVID-19 carries much more risk of potential adverse consequences – such as severe illness, or the long-term impacts associated with long Covid - than getting the vaccine does.

The speed with which COVID-19 vaccine was created is a global success story.

The speed within which the COVID-19 vaccine was created is a huge success story. Evidence of what is possible when scientists across the world work together. No short cuts were taken in creating the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine came about so quickly through people working together, in a world-wide collaboration of scientists, funders, researchers and health leaders. Vaccines are tested on many thousands of people in different parts of the world. They have been tested on people of different ages and ethnicities. They have been tested for both safety and to make sure that they work in preventing serious illness from COVID-19 (effectiveness & efficacy).

The vaccination programme always veers on the side of caution and for that reason you may be asked to wait for 15 minutes after the vaccine, for example if you have had an allergic reaction to another vaccination previously. Allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine are extremely rare and happen almost immediately. Some people may be nervous about needles or getting an injection. The team is trained to deal with reactions and treat them immediately.

The vaccine has things in it that I disagree with.

The vaccines contain an active ingredient, which is a very small amount of a harmless form of the bacteria or virus you are vaccinating against, which cannot cause disease but will stimulate the immune system. This will prevent someone from getting seriously ill in the future. COVID-19 vaccines do not contain chimpanzee cells, foetal tissues,

animal products or eggs, and are suitable for vegans and vegetarians. None of the vaccines contain pork or microchips. COVID-19 vaccines have followed the same development steps as other vaccines, which have been used safely and effectively for many years.

COVID is just like the flu so why do we need a vaccine?

Over 150,000 people have died from COVID-19 in the UK and almost six million (5.6m) people have died from COVID-19 worldwide. Society has been shut down during the pandemic and the vaccine has an important role to play in helping society and the world to reopen. Vaccines are helping to make travel and holidays abroad safer.

While most children and young people infected usually have mild symptoms from COVID-19, some do become quite ill, and some go on to develop more serious symptoms.

Worryingly, we are seeing an increase in the number of people, including young people, experiencing long Covid. This is a new condition that we are still learning about. From what the science is telling us long Covid can cause long term health problems such as headaches, loss of smell and or taste, brain fog or even damage to internal organs. Vaccine strengthens the ability of the body's immune system to fight COVID-19. The research shows that people who have had COVID-19 infection and the COVID-19 vaccination are better protected than those people who have just had the infection.

COVID-19 vaccine boosts your ability to fight the virus and reduces the risk of you spreading it to other people.

What you know about the vaccination and where can you find trusted information?

We get information or news from many places TV, TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, the Government, news alerts, school, our friends, and families. Sometimes the information that we receive has started as a rumour and although it may sound persuasive is not true.

There is a lot of misinformation and inaccurate information about COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccination. It is important that you always use a trusted website such as the NHS website to get your information. Fact checking and myth-busting are two ways society checks whether news is real. Simple research, listen to different sources, analyse the results, and form your own opinion.

Pregnancy and COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 poses extra dangers during pregnancy. Unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated pregnant women are at an increased risk of becoming seriously ill and of pre-term birth if they contract COVID-19. Many pregnant women in the UK have become very ill from COVID-19, some have been cared for in Intensive Care Units and some have sadly died from COVID-19.

Because COVID-19 can cause very serious illness in pregnant women their babies are also at risk. COVID-19 has resulted in two babies in every 100 being a stillbirth (dying in the womb) or being born very prematurely, which puts them at high risk of lifelong health problems or early death.

Because COVID-19 is so dangerous during pregnancy it is very important that any woman who is pregnant or planning to become pregnant gets the COVID-19 vaccine

COVID-19 vaccine can be given at any stage during pregnancy

The vaccine does not contain live coronavirus and cannot infect a pregnant woman or an unborn baby in the womb

The vaccine can be given whilst breast feeding.

Even if you are not pregnant by getting the COVID-19 vaccine you are also helping to protect your mother, sisters, girlfriends and other women in your family and community who could become pregnant. You are also helping to protect the lives of their babies.

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines have any effect on fertility or your chances of becoming pregnant.