



Having a Conversation with Your Team About the COVID-19 Vaccine

Purpose: Use this job aid to facilitate a conversation with your team members about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Goal: Effectively address staff questions, concerns and barriers in order to support individual decision making using evidence-based information and enable vaccinations across Penn Medicine.

COVID-19 vaccination

Ensuring the health and well-being of all who come through our doors—patients, visitors and employees—remains our core mission. Since the start of the pandemic, our employees have been on the frontlines, caring for COVID-19 patients in our hospitals, ambulatory practices and home care services. Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is another important way to help ensure we can all continue to contribute to the safety of the communities where we work and live.

We know that [many are eager to receive the invitation to be vaccinated](#) while others are still trying to decide what is right for them. Although the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory at this time, and the decision is personal, we want to provide managers with guidance to engage in vaccine conversations with colleagues and staff so they can make informed decisions about whether to be vaccinated at this time. By having open conversations, managers can effectively address staff questions, concerns and barriers, support the individual decision-making process and enable vaccinations across Penn Medicine.

Having a supportive conversation about the COVID-19 vaccination

Starting the conversation

Meet with your staff to ask if they have any questions about the COVID-19 vaccine. Open your conversation by reminding them that vaccination is still voluntary. Let them know that you want to support them if they want to get vaccinated. Both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been shown in clinical trials to be about 95% effective at preventing severe illness due to COVID-19. Your conversation can be held one on one or in a group.

Addressing concerns and offering educational resources

You could start by saying, "Because we are concerned about your safety, your co-workers' safety and our patients' safety, we would like for you to consider being vaccinated. You should have received an email inviting you to schedule your COVID-19 vaccine. How can I best support you during your vaccination decision-making process?"

Consider these examples of how you might respond to questions and concerns:

What you might hear: I'm so busy; I can't find the time to get vaccinated.

What you might say: I don't want your work schedule to prevent you from receiving the vaccine and put you at risk for getting infected. Let's work together to find coverage for your work or patients so that you can schedule and maintain your appointment. Hourly employees can clock in to be paid for their time spent getting vaccinated.

What you might hear: I'm worried I'll get sick from, or have a reaction to, the vaccine.

What you might say: The COVID-19 vaccine does not include any of the live virus that causes COVID-19, and based on the clinical trial data, most of the reported side effects of these vaccines are mild or moderate, resolving within a few days. Reactions like soreness at the injection site, fatigue and fever are common. They are a sign that the body's immune response to protect against COVID-19 has begun. To lessen the side effects, you can take Tylenol.

What you might hear: I never received the email to schedule an appointment, or I need help scheduling my appointment.

What you might say: Let's check your email and search for the subject line of the notification email, which reads: "Action Needed: COVID-19 Vaccine Available to Self-Schedule". You will need to download and print your barcoded vaccine consent form for your appointment. Or you can go to the intranet and select COVID Vaccination Form and enter your name and password. You will see a barcoded consent form that you can download and that



lets you know you have been invited to schedule an appointment. Would you like me to help you get scheduled for your vaccination? (If yes, assist the employee with getting scheduled either at that time if a computer is available or plan a time to meet to do this.)

What you might hear: I don't trust the scientific community based on historic mistreatment of people of color.

What you might say: Thank you for sharing your concerns. The Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccine trials had over 30,000 participants each. Both had a wide range of diversity in age, ethnicity and race among the participants.

What you might hear: I am young and healthy. I wear a mask, and if I get COVID, I will be fine.

What you might say: There is no guarantee that an illness due to a COVID-19 exposure will be mild. Even young and healthy people can become seriously ill. The vaccine is estimated to be about 95% effective at preventing serious illness due to COVID-19.

What you might hear: I hate getting shots, and I heard this is three.

What you might say: The current vaccines are administered in two doses given several weeks apart. Each dose will be administered with an injection in the upper arm and should not hurt any more than your annual flu shot. In order to maximize the potential effectiveness of the vaccine, it is essential that you receive both doses.

What you might hear: I still want to wait and get more information about the vaccine before I make a decision.

What you might say*: You are welcome to wait; however, once distribution priorities shift, Penn Medicine is not guaranteed to continue to receive doses designated for employees. I can provide you with additional information about the vaccine if that would be helpful. Whatever you decide, I respect your decision. Please let me know if there's anything else I can do to support you.

*If you want to find an expert within Penn Medicine who can speak with an employee about the vaccine, contact your local HR team.

If employees say they are declining the vaccine: There may be employees who decline the vaccine at this time. Although we would like as many employees as possible to be vaccinated for health and safety reasons, the vaccine is currently voluntary, and UPHS is not imposing any negative consequences for declining it. Inquire why they are declining the vaccine to better understand how to address their questions and encourage them to take the vaccine. If you need a way to respond to an employee who declines, you could say:

Penn Medicine understands that employee situations differ and there may be reasons why you are declining the vaccine at this time. If your situation changes, I would be happy to help you get scheduled for vaccination.

Closing the conversation

For those who have not yet received the vaccine but intend to, help facilitate the process by asking:

- Is there any additional information you need about the process or the vaccine?
- Is there anything that I can do to assist with the process, such as ensuring you have coverage to make your appointment?
- Have I been able to answer all of your questions here? I want you to know that there are additional resources available to you, and that I will direct you to additional resources to help you make your best, informed decision.

End the conversation by reiterating the next steps you both agreed upon. Regardless of the employee's decision, reinforce your respect for their decision.

Additional resources

If your team member has concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines or wants to learn more, you can suggest that they read the [frequently asked questions](#) on the [Penn Medicine COVID-19 website](#).