COVID Vaccine Talking Points

The evidence-based talking points below are provided by HHS to help increase vaccine confidence while reinforcing basic prevention measures.

KEY FACTS ON COVID-19

- **COVID-19 is dangerous.** The infection can cause severe illness, hospitalization, or death. Vaccines offer strong protection from the worst outcomes from COVID.
- **Updated vaccines target Omicron.** Updated vaccines protect against both the original COVID virus and Omicron, and anyone who has completed a primary series can get one two months after their last dose.
- **Vaccination reduces the emergence of variants**. The more unvaccinated people there are, the greater the chance COVID has to spread and mutate into variants that spread more easily or cause more severe disease. Vaccination helps protect individuals and communities.
- **Vaccination reduces the risk of long COVID.** Long COVID leaves people with symptoms such as fatigue, pain, and memory problems that can last for months, and the best way to prevent it is to avoid getting COVID in the first place.
- **Vaccines are widely available and free.** Vaccines are available at no cost to anyone age 6 months or older living in the United States, no matter their immigration or health insurance status.
- **Talk with your health care provider about vaccination.** Getting vaccinated is a decision to discuss with a health care provider you trust. This can include a doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- **The American Medical Association** reports 96% of doctors have been vaccinated against COVID.

GENERAL VACCINATION

Preventive measures still matter.

- More than three-quarters of American adults and two-thirds of all Americans have been vaccinated. That's more than 228 million Americans who have protection from serious illness, hospitalization, and death that vaccines offer.
- It is possible for vaccinated people to get COVID-19; but people who are up to date on their COVID vaccines have strong protection against severe illness and death.
- Masks can add another layer of protection for everyone. People in communities where COVID is spreading should wear a mask in indoor public spaces.
- If you are at high risk for getting seriously sick from COVID or live with someone who is at high risk, you may choose to wear a mask in more situations.
- If you wear a mask, choose one that fits well and that you can wear consistently.

COVID-19 vaccines are available to anyone age 6 months or older.

- Every person in the country age 6 months or older—in every community, in every corner of America—is eligible to get vaccinated.
- Vaccines are free and available, regardless of health insurance or immigration status. And getting vaccinated has never been easier or more convenient.
- Vaccines help prevent severe illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID.
- The risks from COVID far outweigh any risks from side effects of the vaccines.
- Go to vaccines.gov or text your ZIP code to 438829 to find places nearby to get a vaccine.

Updated vaccines offer targeted protection against the Omicron variant.

- Updated vaccines are now available for anyone age 5 or older who received their last vaccine dose at least two months ago.
    - Anyone age 5 or older can get the Pfizer updated vaccine, and anyone age 6 or older can get the Moderna updated vaccine.
- Updated vaccines protect against both the original COVID virus and provide targeted protection against Omicron.
    - Omicron has been with us since last winter and is still the most common variant.
    - The Omicron variant has hospitalized more people than any other variant, and there have been more infections from Omicron than from any other variant.

Three vaccines are available for anyone age 12 or older.

- Vaccines are available from Pfizer, Moderna, and Novavax.
- The Novavax vaccine is the newest vaccine for fighting COVID. It is based on familiar vaccine technology.
    - The Novavax vaccine is a protein vaccine, which packages harmless proteins of the COVID-19 virus with another ingredient that stimulates the immune system.
    - Protein vaccines have been used for more than 30 years in the United States, beginning with the first licensed hepatitis B vaccine.
- CDC believes Novavax may be a good option for unvaccinated people 12 and older who are concerned about the mRNA technology used in the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, which have been thoroughly tested and safely used for nearly two years.
- The Novavax formula can be used by adults 18 and older as a single-dose booster 6 months after completing a primary vaccination.

The risks from getting COVID far outweigh any risks of vaccine side effects.

- Vaccination reduces the risk of getting long COVID by preventing COVID in the first place. Getting vaccinated is a safer way to build protection than getting sick with COVID.
- Having a previous COVID infection does not necessarily protect you from getting another one.
- COVID-19 can have serious long-lasting health effects, while long-term impacts from vaccines are highly unlikely.
- Anyone, no matter their age or health status, who gets COVID can have symptoms for months after they recover from the initial illness, even if they had a very mild case.

- Some studies show that 1 out of every 5 adult COVID survivors reports lingering symptoms – often called long COVID.
    - Common symptoms of long COVID include fatigue, pain, shortness of breath, difficulty thinking or concentrating, fast or irregular heartbeat, loss of taste and smell, memory problems, mood changes, and hair loss.
    - COVID can damage organs, including the lungs, heart, and brain, and can lead to an increased risk of long-term health problems such as strokes or seizures.
    - People who have had COVID are at higher risk for heart disease no matter what other risk factors they have.
- Millions of people have gotten COVID vaccines without experiencing serious, long-term health effects from the vaccines.

We Can Do This.

- Want more information about the benefits of getting vaccinated?
    - **Talk to a doctor**. A health care provider is a great person to answer any questions you may have about the COVID-19 vaccines.
    - **Get answers** by visiting cdc.gov/coronavirus for more information.
    - **Help the people you care about** find vaccines at vaccines.gov.

Treatments for COVID are available and work well against the worst outcomes of COVID.

- If you contract COVID, there are steps you can take to prevent severe disease. COVID is treatable with pills and infusions that doctors can prescribe.
    - When these medications are taken within days of the first symptoms of COVID, they work well to prevent hospitalization and death.
    - Even if symptoms are mild, treating COVID early with medicine prescribed by a doctor can make your infection shorter and less severe and help keep you out of the hospital. This medicine could even save your life.
- Treatment for COVID is based on how high your risk is for COVID complications, regardless of how severe your symptoms are.
    - People who are age 50 or older, have certain chronic health conditions, or are unvaccinated have a higher risk of hospitalization and death from COVID.
        - People in these groups should contact a doctor at the first sign of COVID symptoms to see if they need a prescription for COVID treatment.

VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN

Vaccines are available for children ages 6 months and older.

- You can't predict how COVID will affect kids if they get it. They might be one of the lucky ones and just have the sniffles, but the risk for something much worse is very real.
- More than 15 million children under age 18 in the U.S. have gotten COVID.
- This year, kids under 5 have been more likely than older kids to be hospitalized with COVID. Even children who don’t need hospital care sometimes have symptoms that can last for months.

- Fortunately, children ages 6 months through 17 years can get the protection of a COVID vaccine.

Vaccines for children have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history.

- Clinical trials for vaccines for children ages 6 months to 11 years were designed to look at safety and to find the best dose. The vaccines protect children without causing serious safety concerns.
- Vaccines for children are given in lower/smaller doses tailored just for them.
- CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children, including children who have already had COVID, get a COVID vaccine.