



**VACCA**  
Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL  
CHILD CARE AGENCY

# 7 tips for having 'the vaccine conversation' with family and friends

Young people in Australia are the most likely to fact check COVID-19 information.\* We're also strong leaders of change in our communities. This puts us in a great position to talk to others about vaccine hesitancy!

Some people you know may be pro-vaccination overall, but have some hesitations or misunderstandings about the COVID-19 vaccination program. Talking these concerns through non-judgmentally is a great way to empower people we care about to make informed choices.

## 1. Ask what's making them hesitant and show respect that they feel that way

It's normal to be hesitant about something new, and chances are you've had some questions too. Don't dismiss this — instead, use it as a point to open the conversation 'on the same side'.

### Try saying...

- "It makes sense to have questions about something new! What is it that you're unsure of in particular?"
- "I was wondering about that too! Can I share what I did to help me make up my mind?"

## 2. Affirm their concerns

You can acknowledge and affirm how someone is feeling without agreeing or disagreeing. Even if they're misinformed, focus on what's concerning them instead of being critical. When someone sees that you're genuinely hearing their perspective, they're more likely to hear yours.

Try neutrally affirming, then directing the conversation towards unpacking their concerns in a collaborative way.

### Try saying...

- "I can see this is really important to you. What would reassure you?"
- "I can see you're being careful. You want to be protected from COVID, but want to know the vaccine won't put you at risk either?"
- "It's tricky to find the right information. I recently looked into how..."
- "It's good to ask questions. What kind of information are you looking for?"

Remember, people can be vaccine hesitant for different reasons, and people will want to feel like you understand their reasons. Asking non-threatening questions will help you support them through finding the information they need

### Avoid saying...

- "That's not true."
- "Worrying about that is irrelevant."
- "Where did you even hear that?"

## 3. Be a role model

Explain why you want to get vaccinated yourself, and how you came to this decision. Consider what you've learned that is important to them and speak to that.

### Try...

- Citing a trusted source: "I spoke to my doctor about it."
- Being community-minded: "I work with vulnerable people, so being vaccinated is great peace of mind."
- Thinking about personal wishes like travel or seeing relatives overseas: "Getting vaccinated means we can open the borders again."
- Considering lockdown fatigue: "The vaccine will help us keep Victoria open and avoid more lockdowns."

If you feel comfortable sharing, you can also mention that you're open to talking about your experience. For example, tell them what your conversation with your GP was like, or why it's important for you that the borders re-open.

## 4. Share the reliable sources you get information from

Whether you're sending someone an article or making a reference in conversation, think about which sources are reliable for what kind of information.

### Some sources include:

- [Healthcare professionals](#)
- [Federal Department of Health](#)
- [Victorian Department of Health](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation \(VACCHO\)](#)
- [Australian Medical Association \(AMA\)](#)
- [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\)](#)
- [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)

### What about information in a different language?

Some friends or family may be looking at information overseas. This can be useful as a starting point, but it can also confuse you about the vaccine process, as each country has a different pandemic situation and vaccine rollout approach. To help someone understand the Australian rollout in a language other than English, you can recommend:

- [The Federal Department of Health's translated vaccine websites](#)
- [SBS Language's multilingual Coronavirus Portal](#)
- If they need to speak to someone like a GP personally, help them [book a free translator](#)

## 5. Respect their autonomy

Use language that shows that you respect their ability to make their own decision, rather than telling them what to do or think.

### Try saying...

- "Does that help?"
- "Talking it through with my doctor was way easier than I thought it would be! Happy to share what that process was like."
- "Have a think. Let me know if you want to talk about it more."

When you share information, it's also important for the other person to feel they have their own grasp or ownership of what they've learned.

### Try saying...

- "Do you know much about it?"
- "What do you think?"
- "You've got it! Cool, right?"

## 6. Other tips and what to say

Of course, everyone you talk to is different. You should approach vaccine conversations as talking with and responding to someone, rather than talking at them. Think about your relationship with a person and what you know about their personality too.

If they express uncertainty, acknowledge their mixed feelings and speak to those that are positive or can be built on.

### Example:

They say: "I want to be safe from the virus but I'm worried about the side effects." You respond: "I can see you're conflicted. So you want to be vaccinated, but want reassurance?"

Responding to doubts framed as difficult questions

Show that you understand where they're coming from (you can do this without necessarily agreeing). Then suggest information in a way that respects their autonomy.

### Example:

They say: "But how do we know that the vaccine was really tested properly?" You respond: "I was worried about that too! But then I did some reading about it. I can share if you like?" Or, "I was thinking about that too, and I'm not sure of the answer. But I've been reading about it and am feeling better, I can send you some info sometime soon?"

Sharing information

Avoid being condescending or using language they don't understand. Instead, refer to something they already know and build on that.

## 7. Next steps?

Remember, these can be ongoing conversations - there doesn't have to be an immediate 'conclusion'. You might like to follow up with this person or reflect privately about what was positive or productive about the conversation.

### For further information:

- [Federal Department of Health's translated vaccine websites](#)
- [Federal Department of Health](#)
- [Victorian Department of Health](#)
- [Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation \(VACCHO\)](#)
- [Australian Medical Association \(AMA\)](#)
- [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\)](#)
- [SBS Language's multilingual Coronavirus Portal](#)
- [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#)

\*Source: Park et. Al. 2020, 'COVID-19: Australian news and misinformation', University of Canberra.  
<https://www.yacvic.org.au/training-and-services/covid-vaccine/conversation-guide/>