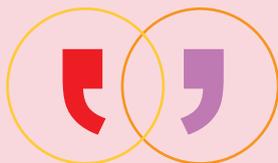


Conversations with friends & whānau about COVID-19 vaccination: **Connecting, not correcting**



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Who is this guide for and how to use it

This guide is for anyone wanting to have a productive conversation about COVID-19 vaccination with someone you know who has some concerns about getting vaccinated.

It's not to pressure, berate or coerce people into getting vaccinated, but rather to connect with people around the topic.

This guide:

- takes you through the key principles
- provides a conversation flow chart, with **three pathways – tautoko, kōrerorero & awhi** – for you to follow depending on where on the vaccination continuum the person you are talking to is
- gives an explainer for those conversations.

The advice is based on research we have been doing at The Workshop during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Key principles for a productive conversation

Getting vaccinated is an act of trust built through relationship, reassurance and connection. As a trusted friend or family member with shared experiences, you are in a unique position to reassure people, *if* you approach the conversation with the intent to listen and connect, rather than correct.

Assume people are willing to get vaccinated. Most people with concerns for whatever reason will get vaccinated.

Don't make assumptions about why people are hesitant. Their concerns come from lots of places and are not always as obvious as you might think (i.e. it's not simply about false information). It's helpful to find out WHY they have hesitations, not just WHAT they are worried about.

People who have negative experiences with a doctor or other health professionals, with people in government, or other formal institutions (e.g. schools) may have low trust in vaccinations. So seek to find out more – this means listening.

Don't start with giving people lots of information about safety and risks (the facts). Even though they may say "I'm worried about safety", **lots of facts are not reassuring to most people when they are scared.**

Instead **use your amazing human superpower of active listening** (Ask – Share – Ask).

After listening, **tell people why you care and why it matters to you, and why others care about their health too** (including health professionals who are monitoring the vaccination). It does reassure people. Try some version of *"I got vaccinated because I don't want Nan to get unwell, and I'm sick of lockdown. It matters to me that you stay well too"*.

You can talk about your understanding of the research after listening. For example, how the vaccines are monitored or how immunity works. But **don't get into "fact offs"** with people – this just leads to people entrenching and protecting their position.

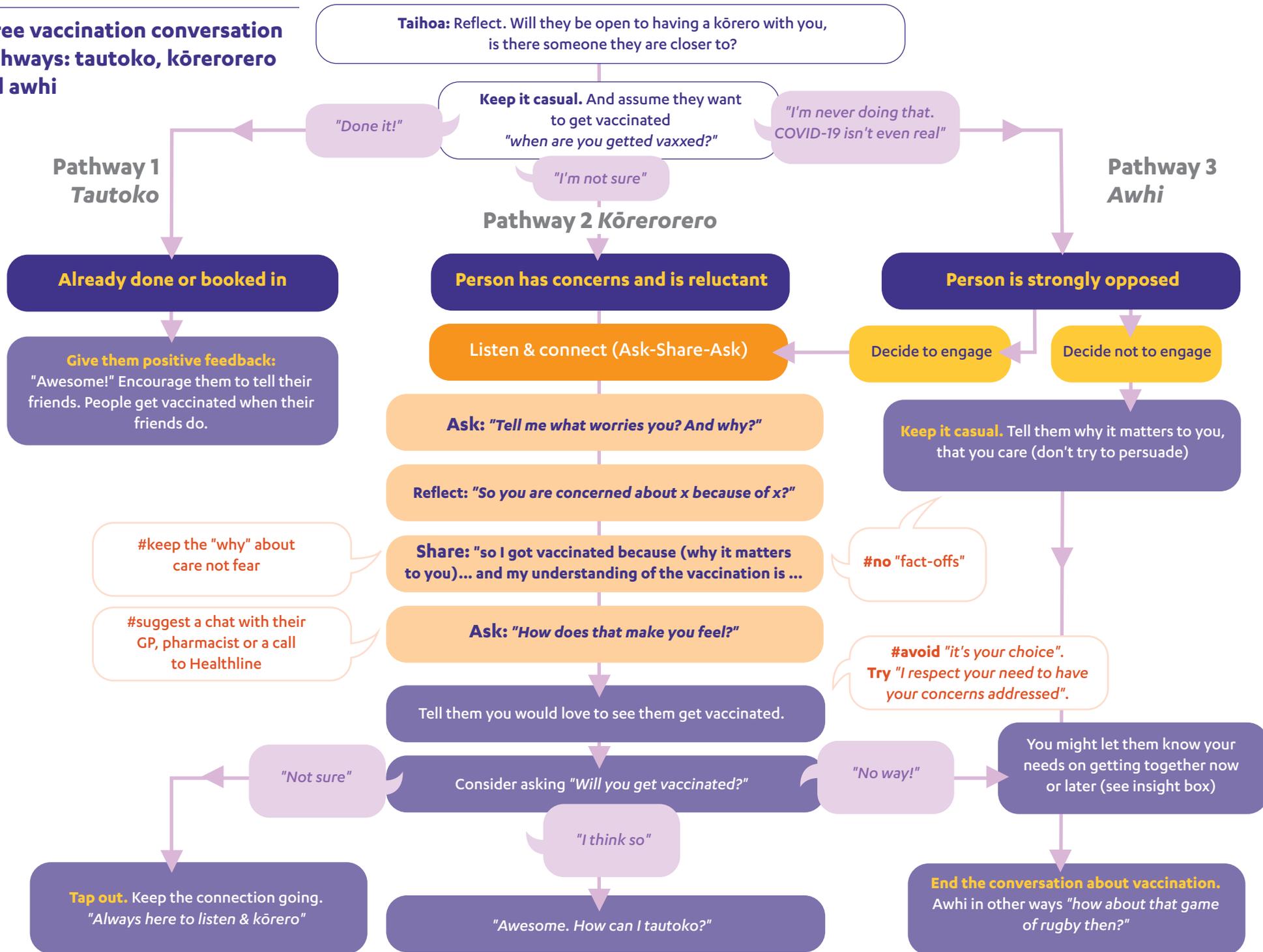
Let people know you want them to get vaccinated because you care. If it feels ok, **ask them to get vaccinated.** "I want you to get vaccinated, mum, will you do that for me?"

Always be ready to stop the conversation if it is heading south. You want to keep the relationship open and once you have listened and stated your position, it is best to back away before harsh words. Awahi people in other ways.

Try not to do any of this on social media. Instead, try meeting for a cup of tea or having a kōrero over the phone.

Be kind to yourself. These can be tricky conversations to navigate with a lot of feelings. Give everyone, including yourself, lots of space and time.

Three vaccination conversation pathways: tautoko, kōrerorero and awhi



Taihoa: Reflect. Will they be open to having a kōrero with you, is there someone they are closer to?

Keep it casual. And assume they want to get vaccinated
"when are you getted vaxxed?"

"I'm never doing that. COVID-19 isn't even real"

"Done it!"

"I'm not sure"

Pathway 1 Tautoko

Already done or booked in

Give them positive feedback:

"Awesome!" Encourage them to tell their friends. People get vaccinated when their friends do.

Pathway 2 Kōrerorero

Person has concerns and is reluctant

Listen & connect (Ask-Share-Ask)

Ask: "Tell me what worries you? And why?"

Reflect: "So you are concerned about x because of x?"

Share: "so I got vaccinated because (why it matters to you)... and my understanding of the vaccination is ..."

Ask: "How does that make you feel?"

Tell them you would love to see them get vaccinated.

Consider asking "Will you get vaccinated?"

"I think so"

"Awesome. How can I tautoko?"

Pathway 3 Awhi

Person is strongly opposed

Decide to engage

Decide not to engage

Keep it casual. Tell them why it matters to you, that you care (don't try to persuade)

#no "fact-offs"

#avoid "it's your choice".
Try "I respect your need to have your concerns addressed".

You might let them know your needs on getting together now or later (see insight box)

End the conversation about vaccination.

Awhi in other ways "how about that game of rugby then?"

#keep the "why" about care not fear

#suggest a chat with their GP, pharmacist or a call to Healthline

Conversation explainer



Taihoa: If you have time before you engage, reflect on where your friend or family member is at in their thinking about the vaccine. Will they be open to having a kōrero, or is there someone else who is closer to them? Could you collaborate as a whānau to awahi this person, being careful not to create a sense of “being ganged up on”?

Once you kick off, start all conversations by assuming a person is willing to get vaccinated (unless you already know them to be strongly opposed, in which case decide if you want to engage again or not).

Keep it casual, this could sound like *“So, when are you getting your vaccination?”* or *“Got my second vaccination, have you had yours yet?”*

Do this because most people are willing to get vaccinated (even people with concerns), it frames vaccination as a normal part of taking care of ourselves to take care of others (as opposed to normalising vaccine refusal), and it shows you are confident in vaccination.



1.

Pathway 1: Tautoko (the vaccinated)

Goal: Get them to share their story

Give them a high five and get them to tell their story.

The more people who talk about why they got vaccinated and why it matters, especially if they had concerns and went on to get vaccinated, the better.

We get vaccinated often because the people we trust and who have similar life experiences and worldviews and values to us appear to trust vaccinations.



Insight: Use more values, and fewer facts

People may say they want more information to feel confident in vaccination, but leading with more facts and information about safety and risks of vaccination *does not* make people feel reassured. Instead, appealing to their deeply held values can shift people's attitudes and behaviours by changing the way they feel about the issue, when used with some selected facts.

Centre values of love and care for family, friends and community, not bare facts or statistical language.

You could try something like, *"So, you should definitely get the COVID vaccination ... it's really important to me that you stay well ... the more of us that are vaccinated, the better it will be for everyone. I'm vaccinated for that reason".*

Know that people trust people like them and those who share their life experiences, not necessarily formal experts or scientists.

Emphasise the collective benefit of vaccination as a whole-of-community response, just like social distancing, mask wearing and hand washing.

Emphasise that vaccines and vaccine adverse events are monitored closely by **people who genuinely care** about the health of the community and are here to support people.

Avoid making the benefits (and risks) of vaccination about an individual. Instead, talk about how the entire community benefits, including them, from collective immunity.

Avoid risk comparison or analysis and "how would you rather die?" type messages. For instance, comparing it to getting blood clots when flying, or being hit by a car. Research shows that these are *not* reassuring to hesitant people.

Avoid using the words "it's your choice". These can trigger anti-vaccination ideas out there, such as "it's my choice to refuse to be vaccinated". We still want to respect people, not pressure them, so you could try instead "I respect that you need to work through this and have your concerns addressed. Can I help/ get you some good information?".

Avoid "fact-offs". Arguing a series of facts with people rarely convinces them to shift their beliefs, and often forces people into a corner where they feel they need to defend a position (even though they may not believe it that strongly). You can provide easy to understand explanations about things like how the vaccines and immunity work – see our insight box.

2.

Pathway 2. Kōrerorero (the not there yet)

These people are usually somewhere in the concerned but not fully opposed group

Goal: Build trust in vaccinations and good information through connecting conversations

It is important not to assume that people's concerns about whether a vaccine is safe or effective is driven by a lack of information about the vaccination. It could be driven by any number of complex interacting issues, including, for example, a fear of needles.

There are many reasons that people might find it hard to get over the vaccination line. There are three main types of influences:

1. Our individual and social influences – the beliefs, attitudes and understandings of the vaccines that come from our culture, our personal experiences with people in institutions like school or government, or a doctor, for example, and the information environment we are in.
2. Our social and political context and environment – this includes, for example, historical and political experiences of neglect, discrimination, lack of citizen participation, and politicisation of science and vaccination.
3. Vaccine and vaccination-specific issues – these include characteristics of the vaccine, vaccine development and process and the accessibility of vaccinations, and previous vaccination experience (also fear of needles!).

So, avoid starting the conversation with data, evidence, or the impact of COVID-19 on people who are not vaccinated, or even assuming they want such information. **Your task is NOT to fill people up with facts** to try to address their concerns.

Do start with building trust and a shared understanding. Ask questions, listen with empathy, and share why vaccinations matter to you, as well as your understanding of the facts where needed. You can do this by:

Coming together to kōrerorero: Ask-Share-Ask

Be humble and open to hearing the person's point of view and concerns. They are our whānau and we need to hear them out. Only they know what is going on in their world and why they have concerns about getting vaccinated. We can respond with aroha and trusted information.

Try to find something you can both agree on, for example, that you both want the best for other people/your community/whānau, to encourage vaccination.

Ask

Invite them to share their thoughts and show that you will listen without judgement: “Want to talk about why?”

Reflect back what you’ve heard and ask them if what you are saying feels right to them.

Share

If they raise specific concerns, for example about vaccine side effects or long-term impacts, focus on the positives you want to convey (“my understanding is that vaccinations will help us all stay well”), rather than dismissing concerns or false information using facts (e.g. “that is false” or “the facts show that vaccinations have not caused more deaths than COVID-19”). **No fact-offs!**

You don’t need to be an expert, or have read all the research. Just make sure you have a trusted person who can provide good quality information to send them to. Maybe it’s a pharmacist or a medical person in the family. Maybe give them resources from an organisation they are more likely to trust. Or suggest they call Healthline to chat.

Let them know what motivated you to get vaccinated in terms of care, not fear. You could try, “I really care a lot about your health and the health of our whānau, hapū, iwi, so I did it to keep Covid out and keep them well”.

Ask

“Does that make sense to you? How do you feel about that?”

Tell them it matters to you that they get vaccinated and ask them if they are willing to get vaccinated.

“I’d like to see you get vaccinated, it matters to me. How can I tautoko you to do that?”

Don’t say “it’s about your choice”. These are the words that people in the anti-vaccination movement use. It tends to keep people in a space of thinking about the risks and benefits to them as individuals. You want people to think about the benefits to the collective (vaccination works best when we all get vaccinated and have collective immunity). We still want to respect people, not pressure them, so you could try instead “I respect that you need to work through this and have your concerns addressed. Can I help/ get you some good information?”.

If they are still unsure, tap out. Keep the relationship open: “always here to listen”. Suggest someone else they could talk to, like a GP or a pharmacist, and point them to a trusted source of information from health professionals they trust.

Offer to tautoko them by being there for them during any conversation or even their vaccination or talking through your own experience.

It’s unlikely that you will convince people in the first conversation, because it’s not an argument to be won. Consider success to be making a connection and people going away to think on what you say.



Insight: Some easy explanations about vaccination

People generally have limited understanding of how health systems, vaccinations and immunity work. Plain language and effective metaphors can help you deepen people's understanding.

Explain how vaccines work in the body using metaphors

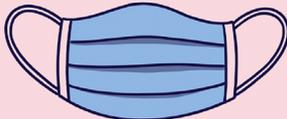
Use machine, learning, factory, building and tool metaphors.

Try something like:

- » "Vaccines power up the immune system to produce its own natural protection".
- » "The antibodies that protect us are manufactured by our own body".
- » "The vaccine trains our immune system to recognise the virus before we encounter it in our community. Then when we are exposed, we will be ok, because our immune system has already been trained to see it off".
- » "Vaccination is a powerful tool".

VACCINATION IS ONE POWERFUL TOOL
WE ALL USE TO STAY WELL.

HERE ARE OTHER TOOLS THAT HELP US:

 <p>Sick leave so we can stay home</p>	 <p>Mask wearing in public</p>
 <p>Wastewater testing</p>	 <p>Improving indoor air quality</p>

Explain how the vaccination works to protect a group

Because vaccination has traditionally been framed as individual choice with individual risks and benefits, people find the importance of achieving vaccination immunity at a group level hard to understand. For this reason, **focus on explaining how the vaccination works to protect a group**, and as a result the person in front of you.

Try something like: *“So, the more of us who are vaccinated the better, because we have more opportunities to keep it away from people we know, to keep it out altogether. Vaccination works at this group level: with everyone vaccinated, we create a sort of shield of protection, stopping the worst of it and then eventually keeping the virus out of a community”.*

WHEN WE GET VACCINATED,



WE'RE PROTECTING
EACH OTHER
(AND OURSELVES)



When we all get vaccinated, we make it very hard for the virus to move between people. As more of us get vaccinated, we stop the virus moving through our communities, keeping it away from our whānau, our colleagues, our kaumātua. Acting together like this keeps the virus away and we all stay well. That's how vaccination and collective immunity protect us all.

Flip from uncertain data to constantly monitored and updated

Science changes all the time and uncertainty is normal. But people who don't have a lot of experience with science, or have seen false information that undermines science, may find this worrying. Instead of talking about advice “changing” or “going out of date”, flip this to the positive and to normalise it, **talk about information being “constantly updated”** by people who care about our health. Additionally, explaining ongoing monitoring can also help.

3.

Pathway 3. Awhi (the firmly opposed)

Goal: Stay connected if you can

If someone is staunchly in denial of the efficacy of vaccination, the key is not to engage in this misinformation, especially in a “my facts are better than your facts” approach, however tempting it is to correct them.

“**Fact-offs**” are likely to backfire and actually strengthen their beliefs and their resolve not to get vaccinated. Avoid phrases like “that is totally false”, and “here are all the reasons why that is false”.

You may choose to engage and follow the *kōrerorero* pathway for people with some concerns. You may want to connect using your values of care and responsibility (people who deny vaccinations are often also motivated by care for people in their lives, among other values).

Something like: “Ok, cool, thanks for sharing that. Do you mind if I talk about what I know about the benefits of vaccination for lots of people in our community?”

Or you may **just choose to stop the conversation early after stating why vaccinations matter to you**. Keep the door open for them, providing an ongoing connection with people who understand how healthy vaccinations are.

REMEMBER: People who decline to get vaccinated now may later go on to get vaccinated. They're our *whānau*, and a lot of information has been created with the intent to divide us. Keep your arms open and be open to listening if you can.

It is fine to just not engage any further on vaccination. People who are very staunchly ideologically opposed to vaccination are very hard to move. In the meantime, *awhi* them in other ways. How about that rugby then?

AND HERE'S WHY WE DO IT:



To care for our family and loved ones



Insight: Getting together with people who are not vaccinated

Before having any potentially tricky conversation with someone who may be opposed to getting vaccinated, it is helpful to decide what the needs of you and your whānau and those you live with are for being around people who are not vaccinated. Whether at holidays, parties or in the playground. Without being vaccinated people are both at greater risk of getting sick themselves and pose a greater risk to the people they come in contact with. There are ways to reduce those risks, with Delta none are as effective as vaccination. You will need to decide based on your own values and personal circumstances if you are prepared to accept that risk.

Having a clear boundary about vaccination is not always easy when people we care about are involved or it creates conflict. But it is important to be clear on WHY you have made this decision on the basis of what you value. It will help keep the conversation in a manageable space.

If you decide that it is best for your whānau to only get together in person with those who are vaccinated

After having the type of conversation we suggest in the flow chart, and establishing the person will not consider getting vaccinated, you will want to tell them what this means in terms of seeing them. You may decide it's a good idea to give it a few days before this kōrero to keep things a bit lower key.

Make it about your values, your care for them and your whānau and friends. Try something like...

"It's really important to us to do everything we can to keep our kids and others around well, including you, and for us, based on what we understand, that means we have decided to not meet with people who are not vaccinated during the pandemic."

You don't need to make it about them or your feelings about them not being vaccinated. Instead focus on you and your values and needs. Something like "this is something we have decided works best for us right now"

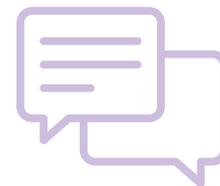
Keep it brief, don't get back into relitigating the evidence or facts, keep it about you and what you value.

Reiterate your care and how important it is to stay in contact with them.

Try something like... *"I know this is hard (brings up big feelings), and I really want to stay in contact in other ways, how about we meet online more regularly?"*

End the conversation about vaccination firmly to keep things in the manageable space. *"Thanks for respecting our needs. So how about that rugby then?"*

Some tips for responding to the tricky questions



If you are asked about	Here are some ideas you could try
<p>Blood clots and other side effects/ risks of vaccination</p>	<p>“I know that the people involved in this work are doing it because they care about our wellbeing and the wellbeing of the wider community. There are some small and rare side effects to vaccination. And I know that when all of us get vaccinated we have the greatest opportunity to keep all of us well during this pandemic and over the long term, which is a big deal. So that is why I got vaccinated and you should too”.</p>
<p>Large numbers not getting vaccinated</p>	<p>“Most people are vaccinated, it’s a pretty normal thing to do. And think about (a person you both know) – they had some worries but they got good advice and now they’re booked in / have been vaccinated. You should too I reckon”.</p>
<p>Everyone should be able to decide / have their own choice as to whether they get vaccinated</p>	<p>“When everyone gets vaccinated, we get collective immunity, which means the whole community is protected / all our loved ones are kept safe / we can all get back to the things we enjoy. I reckon that matters to you, so will you get vaccinated?”</p> <p>AND</p> <p>“I respect that you need to work through this and have your concerns addressed. Can I help with some information? / be here to listen?”</p>
<p>Why is the vaccine advice changing / why has it changed so often?</p>	<p>Instead of talking about advice “changing” or “going out of date”, flip this to the positive and talk about information being “constantly updated” by people who care about our health. For example:</p> <p>“Health professionals really care about our wellbeing. It’s their job to constantly monitor the vaccination program. They are making sure we always have the most up to date advice. That is being good at your job at caring for people”.</p>
<p>Why does it matter if I get vaccinated, as long as you are?</p>	<p>“We need everyone who can to get vaccinated to stop the virus spreading through the community. It’s about our collective immunity. You should be part of that and get vaccinated too”.</p>
<p>I don’t want to put a new drug in my body / I think the rollout has gone too fast to be safe</p>	<p>“The health professionals who developed and administer the vaccine really care about our health – that’s why they monitor it constantly. I really would love you to get vaccinated, as it’s the healthy thing to do in a pandemic”.</p> <p>“The vaccine works by training our own immune system to fight COVID-19. Then it leaves the body completely, and we’re “powered up” in case we are exposed to the virus. For that reason, I’d love to see you get vaccinated”.</p>

For more extensive information see the guide and tip sheet on [“How to talk about COVID-19 Vaccinations. Building trust in vaccination”](#) and [all our other COVID-19 information](#).

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