

# COVID-19 VACCINE CONVERSATION TIP SHEET



CHANTEL (L), LIVING WITH MS

People with MS look to their healthcare providers and the National MS Society for guidance on vaccines, but many want to maintain their autonomy and self-determination in healthcare decisions. The following tips will facilitate a non-judgmental, objective conversation with your patients about decisions to vaccinate.

## 1. Elicit your patient's perspective.

Ask open ended questions to learn what your patient knows about the vaccine. Identify any potential misinformation that may be impacting their decision. If a patient appears hesitant, start by asking, "What concerns or fears do you have about the vaccine?" or "Where are you turning to learn about the vaccines?"

## 2. Validate your patient's perspective.

Reflective statements like, "You have concerns about [fill in their concern]," can help your patients feel understood and more open to hearing alternative information. Keep in mind that many people of color have a valid mistrust in research and the U.S. healthcare system.

## 3. Allow your patient time to ask questions.

Follow up with questions such as, "What questions can I help you answer?" or "What's on your mind"? This provides the patient autonomy and independence, and may allow you to see any dissonance in vaccine hesitancy and their goals.

## 4. Summarize their point of view and reflect on any ambivalence.

Summarizing the patient's point helps them feel heard and understood, allows them to correct any misunderstanding, and allows you to highlight any ambivalence the patient is sharing. For example, you might say, "I can see that you are worried about the vaccine, but also want to attend your annual family vacation."

## 5. Ask what would make them feel more confident about getting vaccinated.

If patients say, "I just want to see what happens," or "I need more time," ask what they need to feel safer. Identifying these concrete goals can help you, (1) provide information, or (2) can help them clarify concrete markers for behavior change. Developing a

timeline ("e.g., I would like to know if there are any major side effects in the first 6 months."), helps them determine when it will be OK to get the vaccine.

## 6. Share your personal experience getting vaccinated.

Personal accounts from peers and healthcare professionals can be persuasive and memorable.

## 7. Ask if you can share more information about the vaccine.

This allows a patient to feel like they are a partner in their care and have

autonomy. None of us like being told what to do or lectured. If they say yes, share with them that the vaccine is **SAFE** (see box above).

## 8. Develop a plan—what's the next step with your patient?

If your patient wants to take a "wait-and-see" approach, ask what they think is a reasonable time to wait and ask them to come back for a visit then. You might also discuss options for maintaining their safety while waiting, such as continuing to wear a mask, avoiding large crowds and avoiding travel.

Use the acronym **SAFE** to tackle misconceptions of COVID-19 vaccines:

**Safe** — the risks and side effects are small compared with the benefits

**Available** — to anyone over age 5

**Free** — no cost to you

**Effective** — prevent death and severe infection

## Additional Resource:

**National Institutes of Health — A Communicator's Tip Sheet for COVID-19 Vaccination**

<http://ntlms.org/nih-tip-sheet>

**Written by:** Meghan Beier, MA, PhD and Dawn Ehde, PhD  
**Reviewed by:** Lilyana Amezcua, MD, MS

# COVID-19 VACCINE RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH MS



“Today we discussed your concerns on the COVID-19 vaccine, and you agreed that I could share some information on the vaccines with you. Below are trusted sources of information.”

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

Latest information on COVID-19 vaccines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html> (English)

<http://ntlms.org/cdc-espanol> (Spanish)



- **National MS Society**

Latest on MS and the COVID-19 vaccines:

[nationalMSSociety.org/covidvaccine](http://nationalMSSociety.org/covidvaccine) (English and Spanish)

- **National Academy of Medicine COVID-19 Vaccine Video**

Black members of the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), the premier health science organization in the United States, encourage Black Americans to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available to them:

<http://ntlms.org/nam-video>

- **Johns Hopkins Medicine**

Sherita Golden, MD, MHS, Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at Johns Hopkins Medicine, offers insights on the coronavirus vaccines and what people of color should know about the COVID-19 vaccines:

<http://ntlms.org/covid-vaccine-hopkins>

- **Telemundo and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

Entertainer Ricky Martin and Dr. Anthony Fauci discuss the COVID-19 vaccines at the Latin American Music Awards:

<http://ntlms.org/telemundo-video>



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Multiple Sclerosis  
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[nationalMSSociety.org/covidvaccine](http://nationalMSSociety.org/covidvaccine)

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