

# Help Address Vaccine Hesitancy

You can help **rebuild confidence in vaccines** as we continue to hear about measles and pertussis cases...and deaths from these illnesses.

The vast majority of these cases are in unvaccinated or undervaccinated people. Help address misconceptions and misinformation.

**Listen in order to understand.** Ask open-ended questions, such as "What concerns you about vaccinating your child?" Or say, "Tell me more."

Recap what you've heard to validate feelings and show empathy. For instance, say, "It sounds like you're nervous about side effects."

Also personalize discussions by sharing your own experiences with vaccination...and encourage talking with others who've been vaccinated.

**Ask to provide facts.** Consent is important to help avoid the "backfire effect"...where providing facts that contradict a person's beliefs increases hesitancy instead of reducing it.

Start by saying, "I have some information that other people have found helpful. May I share it with you?"

**Tailor the info to address specific concerns.** Be transparent.

Expect questions about autism...the top reason for MMR hesitancy.

Clarify that 2 small studies conducted in the UK are the sole basis for the hypothesis that the MMR vaccine is linked with autism.

But point out that the first study was removed from the scientific record due to false data...and the second has major issues with its methods that make results unreliable (omission of important data, etc).

On the other hand, SEVERAL large, well-done studies conducted in the US and other countries show NO link with MMR or other vaccines and autism.

Also point out that the Autism Society and other national disability groups support the science that vaccines are NOT linked to autism.

As another example, some people may ask if vaccines contain fetal parts...since a few are developed in human cell lines of fetal origin (chicken pox, hepatitis A, rabies, and the rubella component of MMR).

But reassure that vaccines do NOT contain any fetal cells or parts.

Also explain that the precursors to these human cell lines were obtained in the 1960s...and no new fetal tissue is needed.

**Contrast disease severity with vaccine efficacy.** For instance, measles causes pneumonia in up to 1 in 20...severe brain swelling that can lead to deafness or brain damage in 1 in 1,000...and death in 3 in 1,000.

But the 2-dose MMR series is 97% effective at preventing measles.

Also clarify that recently touted treatments (clarithromycin, inhaled corticosteroids, vitamin A) do NOT prevent or cure measles.

Get our resource, *Vaccine Adherence: Addressing Myths and Hesitancy*, for help addressing other common concerns.

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