



Using shared clinical decision-making with patients

Family physicians are trusted sources of health information and play a vital role in preventive care. As part of that care, it is important to recommend vaccinations at every patient visit—especially for patients with chronic medical conditions or other risk factors for severe infection.

One effective way to encourage vaccine uptake is by engaging patients in shared clinical decision-making (SCDM). The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) developed this series of resources to support conversations and educate patients about routine vaccines, emphasizing their role in preventing serious illness, hospitalization and death.

Clinical shared decision-making for immunizations

The benefits of SCDM include improving physician-patient communication, building trust and enhancing patient satisfaction.¹ Research shows that prioritizing patient involvement during visits and encouraging a more active role in decision-making leads to positive health outcomes.^{2,3}

SCDM for immunization is you and your patient communicating to make an informed decision using the best available evidence while considering their values and preferences.² It involves improving your patients' understanding of the benefits and risks of routine vaccinations.

SHARE Approach

When you are ready to talk with a patient about vaccination, consider using the five steps of the SHARE (**S**eek, **H**elp, **A**ssess, **R**each, **E**valuate) Approach, developed by the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality.

Table 1. Five steps of the SHARE Approach⁴

S eek your patients' participation by encouraging them to be involved in the decision-making process.
H elp your patients explore and compare the treatment options of immunization by communicating the benefits and risks.
A ssess your patients' values and preferences by communicating to them that their input and values matter.
R each a decision with your patient by recommending and deciding on the appropriate vaccine(s) together. Administer the vaccine(s).
E valuate your patients' decisions by expressing your support for their positive and informed choices.

Motivational interviewing strategies

Motivational interviewing is a proven strategy to help patients make decisions about treatment options—including routine vaccinations—that align with their values, preferences and health goals. It entails answering patients' questions, addressing misinformation and reassuring them that routine vaccines are safe and effective. It helps you emphasize that getting vaccinated protects them, their families and their communities from serious illness, hospitalization or even death.

Table 2. Five steps of motivational interviewing and conversation examples^{5,6}

Step	Description	Conversation example
Step 1 Use a presumptive and positive approach focused on illness prevention.	When you recommend a routine vaccination to your adult patients, presume they will receive it at their current patient visit. Rather than asking whether your patients want to be vaccinated, explain that they are due and will be vaccinated during this visit. Highlight the reasons they need this vaccine for protection from viruses and illness prevention.	<i>"Hello, Ms. Jones. I see you are here for your diabetes checkup. Since you haven't received your shingles vaccine yet, let's protect you from getting shingles and provide you with that vaccine today."</i>
Step 2 Explain the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated compared to not getting vaccinated.	Encourage your patients to ask questions and be involved in the decision-making process.	<i>"Mr. Smith, I want you to understand the risks and benefits of getting vaccinated compared to not getting vaccinated. I want you to be part of this decision, so feel free to ask me any questions you may have."</i>
Step 3 Listen carefully and respond with curiosity, empathy and collaboration.	<p>Patients who are hesitant may choose to get vaccinated during this patient visit or another if you are empathetic and frame the decision as collaborative. If a patient is insistent that they do not want to discuss it, respect their preference but offer to discuss it at a future visit.</p> <p>Depending on your patients' emotions and expressed values, you can briefly explore the reasons they do not wish to talk about vaccines. It may also be helpful to provide patient education materials or to offer reputable resources and websites with vaccine information (e.g., familydoctor.org and vaccinateyourfamily.org).</p>	<i>"Thank you for being involved in this conversation, Mrs. Johnson. I understand that you don't wish to receive a shingles vaccine today. I care about your health and want you to avoid serious illness or hospitalization. Would you be open to talking about the shingles vaccine at your next office visit?"</i>
Step 4 Practice active listening and use motivational interviewing strategies.	Focus on listening to your patient to understand their hesitation, rather than trying to change their mind. It is unlikely that debating with your patient will make them more willing to get vaccinated. Instead, show that you are sincerely curious about their feelings and concerns.	<i>"As we continue this conversation during a future visit, Ms. Williams, I would like to hear your concerns and understand your hesitations about receiving a shingles vaccine. As your family physician, I'm here to offer the best medical advice to help protect you and prevent serious illness or complications."</i>
Step 5 Continue the conversation after vaccine deferral.	If a patient continues to decline a routine vaccine despite a strong recommendation and motivational interviewing, document the conversation and the patient's deferral in their medical record. Indicate in future visit notes that the patient is still due for a vaccine. Consider adding vaccine deferral to the list of active health issue(s). It will serve as a prompt to discuss vaccinations at subsequent visits.	

References

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