

How to Talk With Parents About COVID-19 Vaccinations for Their Children:

What Worcester Parents Are Saying

Lessons learned from parents of children of ages 5-11, 2021-2022, Worcester, Massachusetts



Key messages about COVID-19 vaccines should emphasize & highlight:

- Personal experiences of doctors and experts choosing to vaccinate their own children.
- Vaccines provide PROTECTION and SAFETY against COVID-19.
- The risks from COVID-19 infection are far greater than risks associated with vaccination.
- Vaccines help children return to normal/socialize with friends.
- Vaccines are effective in preventing hospitalization and severe disease.

Parents state that they trust:

Their child's pediatrician/doctor and other parents.

Parents say...

“ I want to hear that they're vaccinating their kids. Like, we know our pediatrician...we see him at the soccer field...that would make me feel great hearing, you know, this is something I am doing for my own kids. ”

Parents want to hear:

FROM PEDIATRICIANS AND OTHER PROVIDERS:

- The benefits of vaccination, including lessening severity of disease and decreasing disruption of school.
- Advice and guidance regarding side effects (short & long-term), speed of vaccine development, dosing.
- Decisions that pediatricians have made in vaccinating their own children and reasons for these decisions.

Parents say...

“ I would like to hear hypothetically my PCP say, I vaccinated 1000 children and there has been zero side effects some--something along those lines ”

FROM OTHER PARENTS:

- Reasons why they decided to vaccinate their own children.
- Stories & personal experiences with the COVID-19 vaccines

“ Parents say... We would like to see cases of children who have already been vaccinated, and how they have reacted. ”

Parents are most concerned about:

- Effectiveness and safety of the vaccine.
- Potential side effects and long-term effects of the vaccines, such as myocarditis.
- Changing messages, recommendations, guidelines.
- The correct dosing of the vaccine for a child's age and size.

Focus Group Methods

The UMass Worcester Prevention Research Center of UMass Chan Medical School held seven virtual focus groups with 67 parents in Worcester, Massachusetts between 10/27/201-1/21/2022. Four groups were held in English, and three in Spanish.

Participants were invited to participate by social media and by community partners at El Buen Samaritano Food Pantry, the YMCA of Central Massachusetts, and the Parents Union of Massachusetts (PUMA).

Parents were asked a series of open-ended questions so they could share their thoughts and feelings on the COVID-19 vaccines for their children.

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