

## Talking to servicemembers about the COVID-19 vaccine

Points to remember when engaging individuals and small groups reluctant or indifferent to accepting the vaccine

### Preparing for & navigating the conversation

- Gauge servicemember attitudes, values, and viewpoints
- Anticipate a range of emotions
- Consider inviting a vaccinated peer to group discussions to encourage and enlighten others
- Lean on current, evidence-based resources to combat false information
- Encourage open, authentic dialogue
- Personalize your message
- Allow servicemembers to ultimately make their own decision about the vaccine

### Top 5 key messages

- 1) “The risks of COVID-19 infection are vastly higher than risks associated with the vaccine.”
- 2) “The majority of healthcare professionals took the vaccine as soon as it was approved and available.”
- 3) “The vaccine may help you develop a more lasting immune response.”
- 4) “Getting the COVID-19 vaccine not only protects you, it will also protect the people you care about including your family and friends, and those who cannot get the vaccine yet.”
- 5) “The more people who get vaccinated, the faster we can reach herd immunity, which will help open the economy and get lives back to normal.”

### Common concerns and impressions

-  The science was rushed and insufficiently tested prior to approval
-  Women will experience negative impacts on fertility
-  The government is attempting to indoctrinate instead of educate
-  Young, healthy people are not at risk for contracting COVID-19
-  There exists a potential for serious side effects and unknown health risks
-  Politicians and other authorities are pushing their own agenda and eroding public trust
-  Severity of the virus has been exaggerated

### Supporting facts

- **61,000 Americans** died during the 2017-2018 flu season, the worst in the last 10 years
- **More than 500,000 Americans** have been killed by COVID-19
- COVID-19 vaccines **do not contain the live virus**
- The COVID-19 vaccine primes the immune system to fight infection. **None of the approved vaccines alter DNA**
- Vaccine trials were thorough and included nearly **30,000 participants**
- **Research started in the 1990s to prevent past coronavirus diseases**, providing a jump start to COVID-19 vaccine development

#### Resources for more information

- **TRICARE:** Official COVID-19 vaccine resources. [tricare.mil/covidvaccine](https://tricare.mil/covidvaccine)

- **CDC:** COVID-19 guidance and resources, updated continuously. [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines)

- **MHS:** COVID-19 toolkit for servicemembers. [health.mil/CommanderToolkit](https://health.mil/CommanderToolkit)