

Community Health Worker Guide to Addressing COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy



Why do children need COVID-19 vaccines and boosters?

- It's effective. The vaccine equips a child's immune system to recognize and resist the virus. This protects them and everyone around them from serious disease and hospitalization from COVID-19. It also protects against Long COVID. Research suggests that people who are vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to develop long COVID.
- Vaccinating children can provide parents with greater confidence for children to participate in childcare and school and other group activities.

Side Effects

- Reported side effects are mild, temporary and like those experienced after routine vaccines. Side effects generally go away in a few days.
- Some children have no side effects.
- Even if you don't experience any side effects, your body is building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Common side effects by age group:

6 months–3 years

- Pain on the leg or arm where the vaccine was given
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Irritability or crying
- Sleepiness
- Loss of appetite

4–17 years*

- Pain, swelling, and redness on the arm where the vaccine was given
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Muscle or joint pain
- Chills
- Swollen lymph nodes

*Side effects are more common after the second dose

Ask your child's healthcare provider for advice on using a non-aspirin pain reliever for reduction of side effects and learn about other steps you can take at home to comfort your child after vaccination.

Safety

- COVID-19 vaccines have been thoroughly tested and reviewed. Through continued safety monitoring, COVID-19 vaccination has been found to be safe for children and teens.
- Millions of children and teens ages 5 through 17 years have already received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you by creating an antibody response without you having to experience sickness.

- Children who have already had COVID-19 should still get vaccinated because it is a safer, more reliable way to build protection than getting sick with COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccines can offer added protection to people who had COVID-19, including protection against being hospitalized from a new infection.
- Myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) is a rare side effect of some COVID-19 vaccines, but in children, myocarditis has been **very rare**. In children 5-11 years old, the risk of myocarditis from COVID-19 vaccination is about 1 in 1 million. This risk is higher in male teens, however the risk of myocarditis is much higher from COVID-19 infection than it is from the vaccine, and myocarditis is usually much more serious after COVID-19 infection than after immunization.

Have questions or concerns about vaccines? Talk with your child's healthcare provider, your child's school nurse to avoid misinformation.

COVID-19 Vaccines and Fertility

- There is currently no evidence showing that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men.
- There is currently no evidence that vaccine ingredients or antibodies developed following COVID-19 vaccination cause any problems with becoming pregnant now or in the future.
- Evidence continues to grow showing that COVID-19 vaccination is safe and effective during pregnancy and is recommended for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding, trying to get pregnant now, or might become pregnant in the future.

Routine Vaccination

Regular visits to the doctor and staying current with recommended child vaccinations are important to keep your child healthy and protect them from serious diseases. Making sure that your child has their recommended vaccines is one of the best things you can do to protect your child and community from serious diseases that are easily spread.

Vaccines prevent approximately 10.5 million cases of infectious illness per year and save 33,000 lives in the United States alone. Work with your doctor to vaccinate your child on time and on schedule to protect your baby when they need vaccine protection the most.

Get your family vaccinated. Vaccines are a **safe and effective** way to protect your child and your community. Appointments can be made through your child's doctor or visit santacruzhealth.org/coronavirusvaccine

For help scheduling a COVID-19 vaccine appointment in English, Spanish, Mixteco or Triqui, call Community Action Board's information line at **(831) 440-3556**.



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SUMMARY OF RAPID COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

This guide was developed using data collected during the Spring 2023 Rapid Community Assessment (RCA) conducted by Santa Cruz County Public Health and Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Inc. (CAB) to address vaccine hesitancy amongst parents in South Santa Cruz County.

The RCA focused on addressing hesitancy towards COVID-19 primary series vaccine in parents and/or guardians (parents) of children, 0-14-year-olds, in South County. As of March 1, 2023, parents (ages 25-44) in this region have some of the highest primary series rates (81%) within the county, while only 36% of children 0-14 in this region have completed their primary series. The goal of the assessment was to determine the influence, trust, accessibility, and motivating factors to getting children vaccinated with their COVID-19 primary series.

Data Collection: 502 surveys completed, provided in written form in English and Spanish, or verbally in Mixteco, 3 focus groups, each with 6-11 total participants and 3 months of social media monitoring and community listening.

Hesitancy: The top response included concern around the "Potential Side Effects of Vaccination" for their child (49%), and information they learned about the vaccine has "Scared Them into Hesitation or Postponing" vaccination (34%).

Trust: The most trusted sources for information vary depending on language spoken, but Community Based Organizations and Public Health Agencies stand out as trusted sources for all parents surveyed.

Accessibility: For parents who completed the survey in English "Getting to Vaccination Sites" was the most often cited challenge in getting their child vaccinated, while for those who completed the survey in Spanish "Language Barrier" was the most frequently cited difficulty. The RCA data suggests that reducing barriers such as creating accessible vaccination opportunities, technology, and ensuring resources are available in indigenous languages continue to be areas to improve.

Motivating Factors

Safety: Nearly half of parents think the COVID-19 vaccine is safe for their child/children (47%), while a third of parents think the COVID-19 vaccine is somewhat safe, and only 10% think it's completely unsafe. Given that relatively few parents believe the vaccine is not safe at all, communication strategies to the general public based on the RCA can be designed to address the concerns of parents who believe the vaccine is "somewhat safe" to strengthen their decision.

According to survey results, parents of vaccinated children are less likely to be concerned about their children getting COVID-19, than those who have not gotten their child vaccinated. Communication strategies can leverage this trend to help reduce fear for parents about their child getting COVID-19.