



Talking about vaccination with kids

Talking to kids about vaccination is important to prepare them for their immunisation appointment and to answer their questions. Talking about what will happen at the appointment gives the child a sense of control and helps to reduce their anxiety. Here are some tips to talk to your child.

Answer your own questions about the vaccines

- Get to know the key facts about the COVID vaccines so you can answer your child's questions. Access up-to-date and trustworthy sources of information (see links to resources below).

Find out their questions and concerns

- Assume your child has questions. Ask them to "Tell me what you know so far about the COVID-19 vaccine?"
- Put aside some time to listen and to let them share all their concerns before you jump in with answers.
- Acknowledge that it's normal to have questions and that you did too.

Answer their questions honestly and try address any misinformation

- Give your child age-appropriate information and try to be reassuring but honest.
- Try to correct any misinformation or myths they may have heard.
- Reassure them about vaccine safety. We know all vaccines have side effects, so help them know what to expect and how any side effects will be managed.
 - "You might get a sore arm, or you might feel a little flat, so we'll take it easy tomorrow."
 - "In Australia, the vaccines have been tested by an agency that makes sure all medicines are safe. And they've been given safely to millions of kids around the world!"
 - "Australia has a system called AusVaxSafety that helps to monitor vaccine safety and side effects in the community (<https://ausvaxsafety.org.au/>). I can show you what side effects other kids are experiencing. Most of them just need some medicine for things like a sore arm or headache."





- Tell them about your own experience getting the vaccine. Sharing your own experience helps to make it feel more normal for kids.
 - “Remember when I got my vaccine? I had a headache but I felt better the next day.”

Let them know they’re protecting themselves and helping other people

- Explain that getting vaccinated is the best way to keep them safe from getting sick from COVID, and it also means they’re protecting other people in their family, school or community. This is especially true for those who might be vulnerable, like their grandparents or anyone who has a lowered immune system.
- Let them know that getting vaccinated will help to reduce COVID cases in schools. School is more likely to stay open and they are less likely to need to go home and quarantine for periods. That means they can have more learning in the classroom with their friends, playing sports and spending time doing what they love

Set clear expectations

- Talk to your child ahead of their appointment. See our [fact sheet](#) – COVID-19 vaccination planning for young children, which includes suggestions of distractions or soothing activities.
- Try to explain what to expect on the day of the vaccination, but don’t discuss the needle too much to avoid building up fear.
- Try not to say “It won’t hurt at all” but rather “Try to be brave, it will be over soon”, as we know needles hurt a bit but it is over quickly.

Reward and praise them

- Thank them for doing a good job and for helping to do their part to protect the people you love
- Offer to do something fun afterwards, like get an ice cream, to reward them for being brave

Resources

- [Victorian Government COVID-19 vaccination information for children and teenagers](#)
- [Victorian Government vaccine information for people with a disability or special requirements](#)
- [Commonwealth Government how to speak to kids about COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne COVID-19 and Kids Resource Hub](#)
- [Unicef How to talk to your children about vaccines](#)
- [Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Vaccine resources for kids and teens](#)
- [Mayo Clinic Talking to your kids about vaccines](#)

