
Disclosing:
Speaker--GlaxoSmithKline

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STRATEGIES TO COMMUNICATE VACCINE SAFETY TO PARENTS

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OBJECTIVES

- Identify common concerns and misconceptions that parents have regarding immunizations.
- Discuss “Risk from Disease” versus “Risk from Vaccines”
- List two effective strategies to communicate vaccine safety to parents

Providers Guide: Helping Parents Who Question Vaccines (CDC)

“Effective, empathetic communication is critical in responding to parents who are considering not vaccinating their children. Parents should be helped to feel comfortable voicing any concerns or questions they have about vaccination, and providers should be prepared to listen and respond effectively.”

First Ask the *Right Questions*:

- *In the right way* - non-confrontational manner
- Medical History, Allergies, and previous experiences including vaccine reactions.
- ***Does the child have a valid contraindication to a vaccine?***
- Explore parent's reasons for wanting to delay or refuse vaccination.
 - Have they had a bad experience?
 - Obtained troubling information?
 - Do they have religious or philosophical reservations?

From Immunization Action Coalition: Quick Answers to Tough Questions, Vaccine Talking Points for Busy Health Professionals (Anderson)

Ask the *Right Questions*



- Ask parents to identify the source(s) of safety concerns or misconceptions about vaccinations.
- Listen carefully, paraphrase and ask them if you have correctly interpreted what they have said.

From Immunization Action Coalition: Quick Answers to Tough Questions, Vaccine Talking Points for Busy Health Professionals (Anderson)

Convey Respect and Address Concerns

- Patient, empathetic, and non-judgmental approach is best
- Provide factual information in understandable language
- Address the specific concerns or misconceptions the parent has about vaccination.

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Addressing Questions about whether Vaccines Cause Autism



"All those people who say that the MMR vaccine causes autism must be on to something."

"Autism is a burden for many families and people want answers—including me. But well designed and conducted studies that I can share with you show that MMR vaccine is not a cause of autism."

Addressing Questions about whether Vaccines Cause Autism

1. Provide patient and empathetic reassurance:
 - their infant's health is their top priority
 - their infant's health is also your top priority
 - putting children at risk of vaccine-preventable diseases without scientific evidence of a link between vaccines & autism is a risk you are not willing to take;
2. Relay your knowledge re: the onset of regressive autism symptoms often coincides with the timing of vaccines but is not caused by vaccines;
3. State your personal and professional opinion that vaccines are very safe
4. Remind parent that vaccine-preventable diseases, which may cause serious complications and even death, remain a much greater threat.

Doesn't the MMR vaccine causes autism?

- **Many large, well-designed studies have found no link between MMR and autism.**
- **The 1998 study that started this concern was based on 12 children.**
- **In 2004, 10 of the 13 authors of this study retracted the study's interpretation.**
- **Autism usually becomes apparent around the same time MMR is given--no causality proven.**
- **Autism probably has multiple components, including genetics (twin studies).**

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Isn't it safer to receive MMR as 3 individual antigens rather than combined?

- **There is no credible evidence that MMR vaccine causes autism.**
- **There is no evidence that dividing the vaccine into three antigens would provide any benefit.**
- **Requiring more doses leaves the child potentially susceptible to serious diseases while waiting to receive the additional doses.**
- **Separate doses increase the number of doctor visits, costs, and discomfort to child.**

From Immunization Action Coalition: Quick Answers to Tough Questions, Vaccine Talking Points for Busy Health Professionals (Anderson)

Addressing Questions about the Number of Vaccines and Vaccine Ingredients

- Reinforce the seriousness of the diseases prevented by vaccines
- Share your knowledge that no evidence suggests that a healthy child's immune system will be damaged or overwhelmed by receiving several vaccines at one time.
- Refer to information sheet:
 - *The Childhood Immunization Schedule: Why Is It Like That?*
(www.cispimmunize.org/pro/pdf/Vaccineschedule.pdf)

From Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents: Talking with Parents about Vaccines for Infants. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/conversations. October 2009

Questions about whether Vaccines are More Dangerous for Infants than the Diseases they Prevent

*"What are all these vaccines for?
Are they really necessary?"*

"I know you didn't get all these vaccines when you were a baby. Neither did I. But we were both at risk of serious diseases like Hib and pneumococcal meningitis. Today, we're lucky to be able to protect our babies from so many serious diseases with vaccines."



Questions about whether Vaccines are More Dangerous for Infants than the Diseases they Prevent

Contributing to These Concerns:

- Parents may not have seen a case of a vaccine-preventable disease firsthand.
- Creates a false sense that these vaccines are not necessary anymore
- Parents may question if vaccines are really necessary
- Parents may believe the risks of vaccinating infants outweigh the benefits of protecting them from infection with vaccine-preventable diseases

Helpful Approaches:

- Provide information from your own experience about the seriousness of the diseases, the fact that cases & outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases are occurring now in the U.S.
- Reinforce that even when diseases are eliminated in the U.S., they can make a rapid return in children and adults who are not immunized
 - For example: travelers bring the diseases into the U.S.
- Remind parents about ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of vaccines

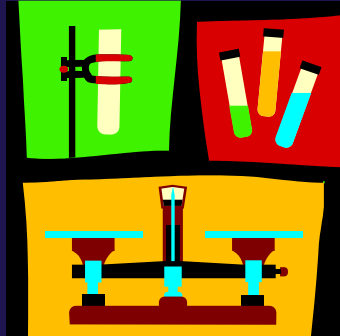
From Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents:

Talking with Parents about Vaccines for Infants. www.cdc.gov/vaccines/conversations. October 2009

Won't giving an infant multiple vaccines overwhelm his immune system?

- **Vaccines use only a tiny amount of the immune system's ability to respond; in theory, a child could respond to 10,000 vaccines.**
- **Using this estimate, 11 vaccines would "use up" 0.1% of an infant's immune system.**
- **Although children receive more vaccines now than in the past, today's vaccines contain fewer antigens (e.g., sugars and proteins).**
- **Smallpox vaccine alone contained 200 proteins: the 11 currently recommended routine vaccines contain fewer than 130 immunologic components.**

Addressing Questions about Known Side Effects



"I'm worried about the side effects of vaccines. I don't want my child to get any vaccines today."

"I'll worry if your child *doesn't* get vaccines today, because the diseases can be very dangerous—most, including Hib, pertussis, and measles, are still infecting children in the U.S. We can look at the Vaccine Information Statements together and talk about how rare vaccine side effects are."

"You really don't know if vaccines cause any long-term effects."

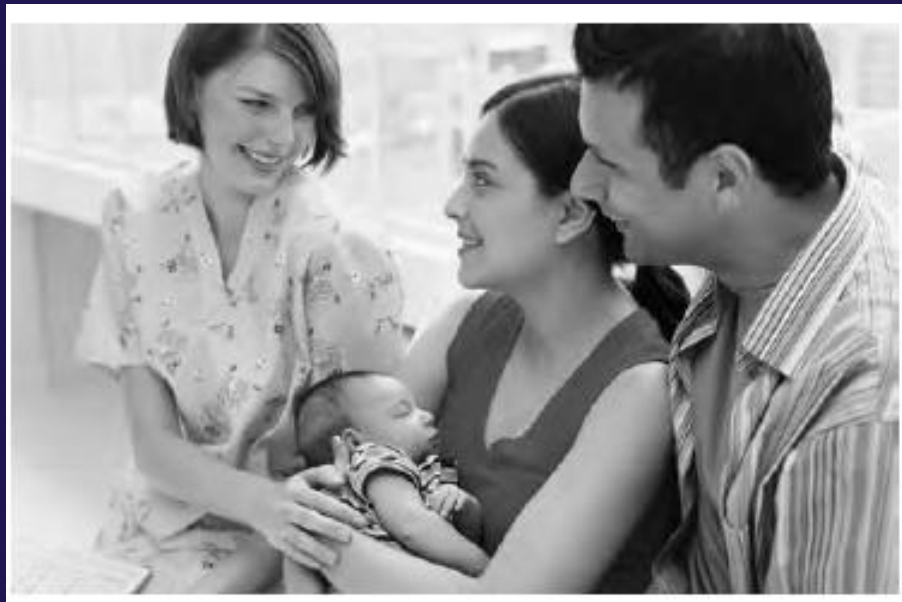
"We have years of experience with vaccines and no reason to believe that vaccines cause long-term harm. I understand your concern, but I truly believe that the risk of diseases is greater than any risks posed by vaccines. Vaccines will get your baby off to a great start for a long, healthy life."

Don't worry about every possible question -

- **Be able to recommend evidence-based websites & resources**
- **Provide evidence-based handouts for patients/parents.**
- **Be aware of vaccine-critical groups and individuals & become familiar with their websites.**
- **Be ready to answer the most common questions**
- **Don't "fudge" an answer: Parents will lose confidence if they sense that you are insincere**
 - **It is acceptable to say you will research a question and get back to them with more information.**
- **It is worth your time: parents still respect the opinion of their healthcare providers.**

From Immunization Action Coalition: Quick Answers to Tough Questions, Vaccine Talking Points for Busy Health Professionals (Anderson)

Communication Strategies— How to Have a Successful Dialogue



Provider Resources for Vaccine Conversations with Parents at
www.cdc.gov/vaccines/conversations

Take Time to Listen

- If parents need to talk about vaccines, give them your full attention.
- Resist the urge to multi-task while a parent talks, ***no matter how busy you are***
- Maintain eye contact with parents, restate their concerns to be sure you understand their viewpoint, and pause to thoughtfully prepare your reply.
- Your willingness to listen will likely play a major role in helping parents with their decisions to choose vaccination.

Solicit and Welcome Questions

- If parents seem concerned about vaccines but are reluctant to talk, let them know that you want to hear their questions
- Put yourself in parents' shoes and acknowledge parents' feelings and emotions, including their fear and desire to protect their children.
- Remind parents that you know why they are concerned — their infant's health is their top priority
- Remind parents that their infant's health is your highest priority too
- ***Don't be offended, and don't offend***

Science versus Anecdote

- Too much science vs. too little science –
 - gauge each parent.
- Too much anecdotal information vs. telling your stories re: unvaccinated children who became ill.
- Which approach to use will depend on your knowledge of the family. Watch and listen.
- Be prepared to use the mix of science and personal stories that will be most effective in addressing parents' questions.

Acknowledge Benefits & Risks.

- Never state that vaccines are risk-free
- Always discuss honestly the known side - effects caused by vaccines.
- Remind parents that the diseases these vaccines prevent can return.
- You can be honest and say that not vaccinating their child is a risk that will worry you.

Respect the Parents' Authority

- Most parents want to work in partnership with their child's health care providers.
- Health care providers partner with parents every day about various health issues.
- By talking respectfully with parents about their immunization concerns, you can:
 - build on this partnership
 - build trust,
 - support parents in the decision to choose vaccination.

Reduce the Stress of Shots

- Show parents ways they can make the vaccination visit less stressful for the child.
- Begin by reinforcing that crying is a normal response for the child
- Suggest that they stay calm so that the child does not reflect the parent's stress



What If Parents Refuse to Vaccinate?

- **DO NOT EXCLUDE THE PATIENT FROM YOUR PRACTICE:**
 - Excluding children from your practice when their parents decline immunizations is not recommended.
 - It can put the child at risk of many different health problems—not just vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Remember, unvaccinated children did not decide for themselves to remain unvaccinated.
- They still require optimal pediatric health supervision and care.
- Provide parents with information about clinical presentations of vaccine-preventable diseases, including early symptoms.
 - Diseases like pertussis and measles are highly contagious and may present early as a non-specific respiratory illness.

Provide Parents with information re:

Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System
(VAERS)

- National system for passive surveillance
- Jointly managed by FDA and CDC
- Reports received from health professionals, vaccine manufacturers, and the public

Source: *Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, FDA*

VAERS data are monitored to--

- Detect new, unusual, or rare vaccine adverse events
- Monitor increases in known adverse events
- Identify potential patient risk factors for particular types of adverse events
- Identify vaccine lots with increased numbers or types of reported adverse events
- Assess the safety of newly licensed vaccines

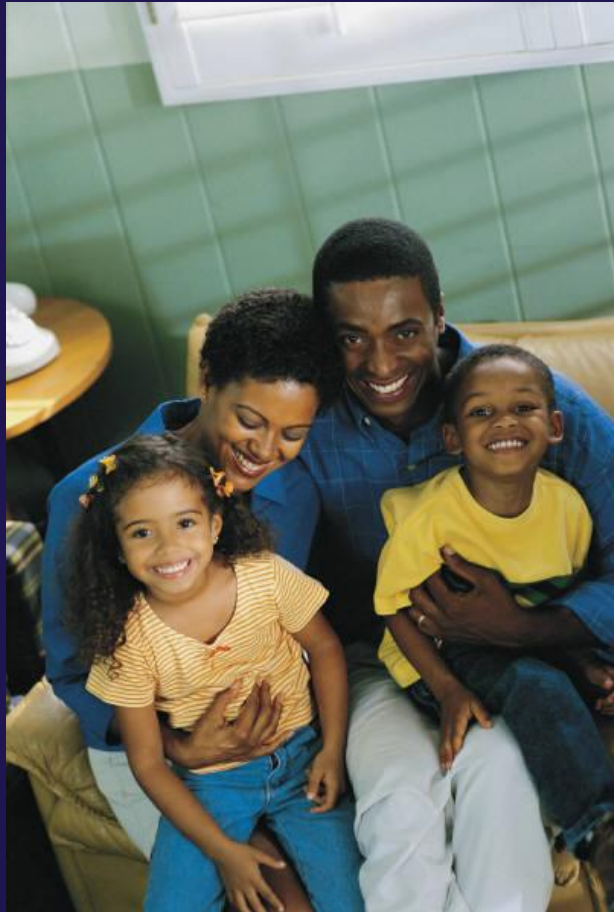
From the CDC:

- ***If You Choose Not to Vaccinate Your Child, Understand the Risks and Responsibilities***



- Any vaccine-preventable disease can strike at any time in the U.S. because these diseases still circulate either in this country or elsewhere in the world.

Number 1 Take Home Message?



- Like any health promotion strategy, talking with parents about vaccines is ***dependent on the relationship and trust*** that you have developed with each parent.
- It is the foundation upon which mutually- agreed upon health goals for their children - your patients - are identified and attained.