



What to say to families during the COVID-19 pandemic

Here are some sample messages, adapted from a communication issued by the State of California's Vaccines for Children program¹ that may help ease families' anxiety about returning to your practice for essential vaccinations in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. You may modify these messages as appropriate to reflect your practice's risk mitigation strategies.

Emphasize all the steps your practice is taking to keep patients and staff safe.

- "We are taking many precautions to help keep our patients safe, including scheduling immunization visits in the morning and only seeing sick children in the afternoon."
- "We're screening everyone who comes into our practice, including taking their temperature."
- "We disinfect our entire clinic twice daily, and disinfect exam rooms after each visit."
- "We have designated areas of our practices to separate sick patients from healthy patients."
- "We all wear masks at all times."
- "We're scheduling all appointments so only one patient is in the clinic at a given time."

Inform them of alternate ways your practice could deliver vaccinations.

- "We can schedule a telehealth appointment, where I address your questions and concerns on your phone or computer, followed by a quick immunization visit to help keep your child safe."
- "Our clinic is offering 'drive-through' immunizations, so you don't even have to come inside!"

Reinforce the fact that vaccine-preventable diseases continue to pose a threat to their child.

- "As a parent, I would not wait to immunize my child; as your doctor, I strongly recommend that we help protect your child from diseases that could cause harm, during or after the pandemic."

Inform them that getting caught up on vaccination later on may not be so easy.

- "When our state 'reopens,' there may be many children who need to catch up on immunizations, increasing wait times for all appointments. In that time, your child could be exposed to dangerous vaccine-preventable diseases circulating in the community. Let's avoid that danger by keeping your child on track."

Reference:

1. EZIZ. Continuing vaccination during COVID-19 pandemic. Published April 2020. <https://eziz.org/assets/docs/Memo/2020April29ContinuingVaccinationCOVID19.pdf>. Accessed May 15, 2020.

This communication is not an endorsement of any specific measure. Each health care provider practice will need to determine what measures may be appropriate in light of the practice's specific circumstances to determine how best to manage patient visits.

At this time, there are no clinical data related to the administration of any of the Merck vaccines in patients diagnosed with COVID-19; therefore, the safety and efficacy of Merck vaccines in this population are not known.