

Confident Vaccine Conversations

Sarah Spah, MSN, RN, PHN| Nurse Specialist

Lizz Wenzel | Immunization Quality Improvement Coordinator

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Objectives

1. Identify what influences a vaccine decision.
2. Learn how to navigate vaccine questions or concerns.
3. Build confidence in using the 4-As approach.
4. Know where to locate reliable vaccine resources.

Giving context to our conversation today

- Why are we here?
- Why does this matter to you/your job?
- What are the challenges in the immunization world that brought us here?



How is a vaccine decision made?

- People do not make health choices based on facts alone. They think about:
  - Values
  - Risk
  - Emotions
  - Access
  - Experiences



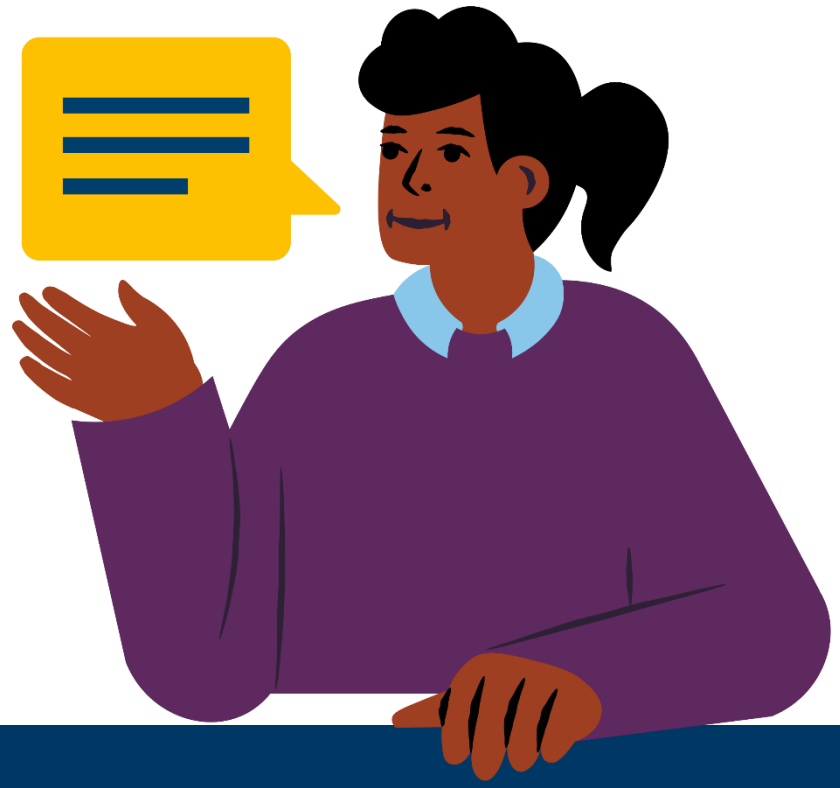
What influences vaccine confidence?

- Personal values.
- Healthcare experiences.
- Historical or cultural influences.
- Family and peer group opinions.
- Media/social media bubble.
- Access.





Aim for the moveable middle



Starting the vaccine conversation

Talking about vaccines: The four As

Ask



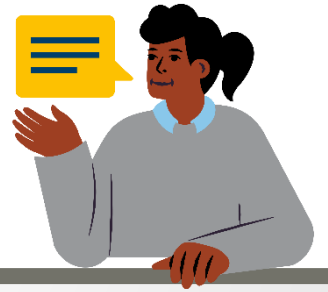
Acknowledge



Affirm



Answer



How we begin matters

- Getting into the right mindset:
  - Be curious about why the other person is hesitant.
  - Decide to dig deeper into their concerns.
  - Listen to learn, not to respond.



1. Ask

- **ASK:** Open-ended questions.
  - Helps you learn more about the person's experiences, concerns, and perspectives.
  - Helps you foster conversation, not debate.
  - Helps you build trust and strengthen connection through empathy, respect and genuine curiosity.



Active listening tips

- Listen to learn, not to respond.
- Use body language to show you are listening.
- Ask open-ended clarifying questions.
- Reflect back what they are saying to check your understanding.
- Listen with empathy.



Build a bridge

- Establish trust as the foundation for your conversation.
  - Listen for common ground.
  - Connection before correction.
  - Build trust based on their beliefs.
- Remember: The goal of the first response is to keep the conversation moving forward.



2. Acknowledge

- **ACKNOWLEDGE** their concerns
  - Acknowledge their concerns with compassion.
    - “You are not alone. Many people ask questions about vaccines like this.”
    - “I appreciate you sharing your concerns with me.”
  - Find the grain of truth.
    - “You are right about that and it’s an important aspect to consider.”
    - “That’s a valid point. It’s great you’re so well-informed on this issue.”
  - Build on shared values.

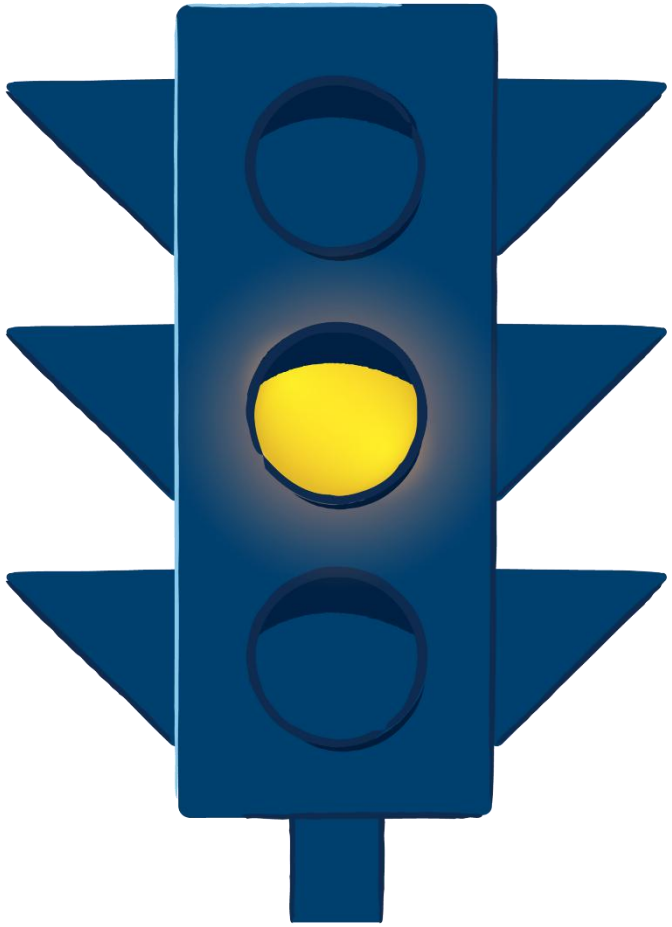
3. Affirm

- **AFFIRM** their feelings and concerns.
  - Provides a sense of understanding, respect, and collaboration.
  - Affirm the experiences and feelings of the other person to build trust and to feel safe to share concerns.
    - “You are thinking carefully about your child’s health”



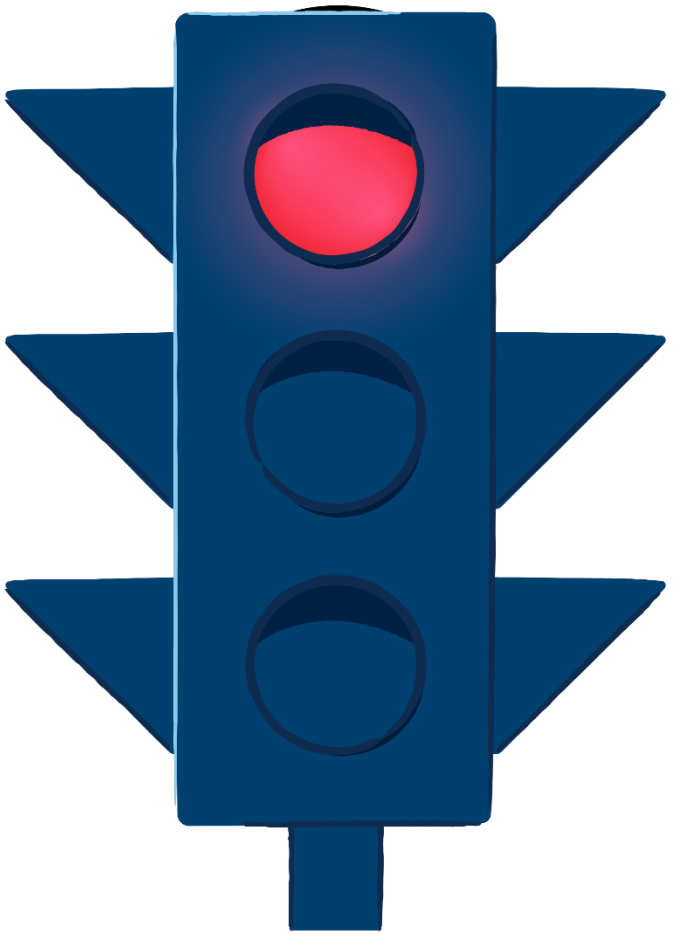
4. Answer

- **BUT FIRST, ask permission.**
  - The person with the questions determines when to receive answers.
  - Why you ask permission:
    - Empowers them.
    - Lowers their resistance.
  - Ways to ask permission:
    - “I’ve come across some data that might be useful; do you mind if I share what I’ve learned?”



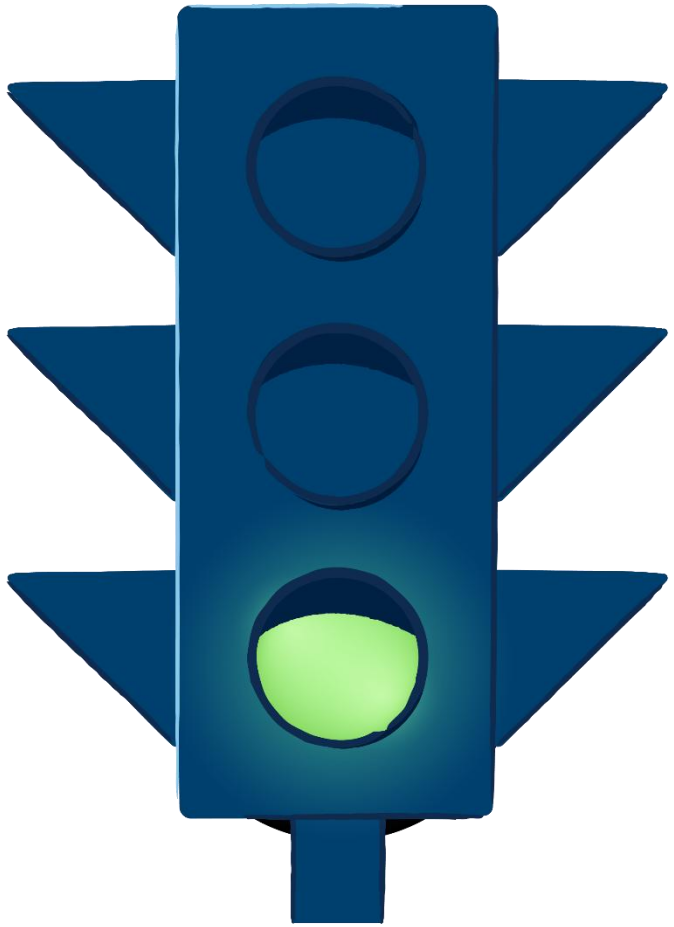
If they say no

- Express support for the person as the decision-maker.
- Respect their autonomy and leave the door open.
  - “This is completely your choice. I want you to be comfortable about the decisions you make.”
  - “I respect that. If questions come up later, I’m always happy to talk about it.”



If they say yes: How to provide an answer

- Provide information on what you know and how you know it.
  - Keep your answers simple and ask if they want more information.
  - Share one answer at a time.
  - Stay on the topic of their concern.
- When you don’t know the answer: Be honest (don’t fake it)
  - You can offer to do more searching and get back to them.



You’re a success!

- The other person didn’t change their mind? That’s OK.
- You showed you are a trustworthy, empathetic source of:
  - Information
  - Access help
  - Support
- It can take time for someone to change their decision.

ASK example

Person:

“I’ve heard I’m supposed to get the flu and COVID vaccines this fall but I’m not sure. I’m worried they aren’t safe.”

Vaccine advocate:

“Can you tell me more about what concerns you about vaccine safety?”

ACKNOWLEDGE example

Person:

“I’ve heard there are chemicals in vaccines that can harm you.”

Vaccine advocate:

“I can understand that you want to know what goes in your body and that it’s safe. Many people have concerns like this.”

AFFIRM example

Person:

“Right. I don’t want to rush into something that I don’t understand.”

Vaccine advocate:

“You want to take care of yourself and understand what goes into your body. That makes a lot of sense!”

Asking permission example

Vaccine advocate:

“Could I share some information about vaccine ingredients with you?”

ANSWER example

Person:

“Sure, that could be helpful.”

Vaccine advocate:

“Most vaccine ingredients help the vaccine work better or stay safe. For example, some ingredients boost the immune response so fewer doses are needed. Others keep the vaccine from going bad before it can be given. The amounts are very small. What are you thinking after hearing that?”

Example scenarios

“I’ve heard babies get a lot vaccines. It seems like way too much for my baby’s tiny body. Which ones should I absolutely get and what can I delay?”

Example scenario

Table Activity

You are visiting with a parent of a nearly 2-month-old.

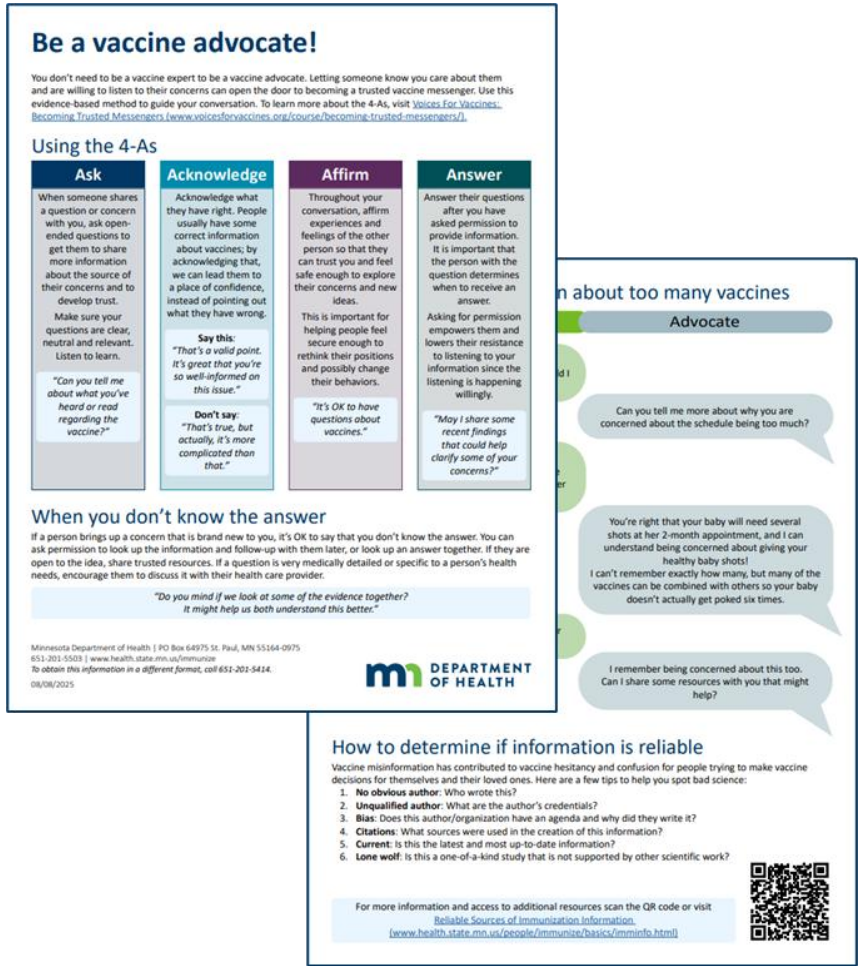
- **You say**: “Samuel will be going in for his two-month check-up soon, and that is when he can start the routine immunization schedule. Can we talk about what to expect at that appointment?

- **Parent responds**:
  “I don’t know… thinking about giving Samuel vaccines makes me so nervous.”

How might you continue the conversation?

MDH reliable vaccine resources for patients

- Reliable Sources of Immunization Information (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/imminfo.html)
  - A list of all the most reputable sources for immunization information.
- Be a vaccine advocate! (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/beavaxadvo.pdf)
  - Short handout that summarizes the 4-As and has a brief example scenario.



Be a vaccine advocate!

You don't need to be a vaccine expert to be a vaccine advocate. Letting someone know you care about them and are willing to listen to their concerns can open the door to becoming a trusted vaccine messenger. Use this evidence-based method to guide your conversation. To learn more about the 4-As, visit Voices For Vaccines: Becoming Trusted Messengers (www.voicesforvaccines.org/course/becoming-trusted-messengers/).

Using the 4-As

Ask	Acknowledge	Affirm	Answer
When someone shares a question or concern with you, ask open-ended questions to get them to share more information about the source of their concerns and to develop trust. Make sure your questions are clear, neutral and relevant. Listen to learn. "Can you tell me about what you've heard or read regarding the vaccine?"	Acknowledge what they have right. People usually have some correct information about vaccines; by acknowledging that, we can lead them to a place of confidence, instead of pointing out what they have wrong. **Say this:** "That's a valid point. It's great that you're so well-informed on this issue." **Don't say:** "That's true, but actually, it's more complicated than that."	Throughout your conversation, affirm experiences and feelings of the other person so that they can trust you and feel safe enough to explore their concerns and new ideas. This is important for helping people feel secure enough to rethink their positions and possibly change their behaviors. "It's OK to have questions about vaccines."	Answer their questions after you have asked permission to provide information. It is important that the person with the question determines when to receive an answer. Asking for permission empowers them and lowers their resistance to listening to your information since the listening is happening willingly. "May I share some recent findings that could help clarify some of your concerns?"

When you don't know the answer

If a person brings up a concern that is brand new to you, it's OK to say that you don't know the answer. You can ask permission to look up the information and follow-up with them later, or look up an answer together. If they are open to the idea, share trusted resources. If a question is very medically detailed or specific to a person's health needs, encourage them to discuss it with their health care provider.

"Do you mind if we look at some of the evidence together? It might help us both understand this better."

Minnesota Department of Health | PO Box 64975 St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5503 | www.health.state.mn.us/immunize
To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-5414.
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n about too many vaccines

Advocate

Can you tell me more about why you are concerned about the schedule being too much?

You're right that your baby will need several shots at her 2-month appointment, and I can understand being concerned about giving your healthy baby shots!
I can't remember exactly how many, but many of the vaccines can be combined with others so your baby doesn't actually get poked six times.

I remember being concerned about this too. Can I share some resources with you that might help?

How to determine if information is reliable

Vaccine misinformation has contributed to vaccine hesitancy and confusion for people trying to make vaccine decisions for themselves and their loved ones. Here are a few tips to help you spot bad science:

1. **No obvious author**: Who wrote this?
2. **Unqualified author**: What are the author's credentials?
3. **Bias**: Does this author/organization have an agenda and why did they write it?
4. **Citations**: What sources were used in the creation of this information?
5. **Current**: Is this the latest and most up-to-date information?
6. **Lone wolf**: Is this a one-of-a-kind study that is not supported by other scientific work?

For more information and access to additional resources scan the QR code or visit Reliable Sources of Immunization Information (www.health.state.mn.us/people/immunize/basics/imminfo.html)

Immunization Schedules

- Infants and Children: All About the AAP Recommended Immunization Schedule - HealthyChildren.org
- Adults: Immunization And Vaccine Schedules And Resources | AAFP
- Pregnant Persons: Maternal Immunization Schedule | ACOG - College

Translated Vaccine Information Statements (VIS)

- VIS Translations Index | Immunize.org

Thank you

Reach out to the team at Health.ClinicalSME@state.mn.us with questions or to request a training for your organization.