

# ACNM

## Talking points for Midwives about Immunization in Pregnancy

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) affirms that all women and families should have access to accurate, evidence-based information regarding the role of immunizations in the prevention of disease so they can make informed choices about the use of vaccinations for themselves and their families.

The following vaccine schedule should be recommended to all pregnant people:

| Vaccine | Gestational weeks | Time of the year                           |
|---------|-------------------|--|
| Tdap    | 27-36 weeks       | All year                                   |
| COVID   | Any week          | All year, especially in fall               |
| Flu     | Any week          | During flu season, ideally before November |
| RSV     | 32-36 weeks       | September to January                       |

As a valued and trusted source of health information for pregnant people, you can have a positive impact on vaccine uptake. Midwives are skilled at providing individualized, culturally congruent, reliable and evidenced based information to pregnant people.

Studies have shown that people who refuse or are hesitant about immunization often are concerned about vaccine safety. Therefore, midwives must be equipped with knowledge of vaccine safety and effectiveness as well as communication skills to engage in effective dialogue with pregnant people. Midwives should use evidence-based communication techniques to increase vaccine uptake. These techniques include:

- giving a strong recommendation for vaccination,
- using a presumptive format to start the conversation,
- applying motivational interviewing techniques with people who express hesitancy, and
- continuing to communicate your support for the recommended schedule in subsequent conversations over time.

## **Motivational Interviewing**

Motivational Interviewing is patient centered and may take place over multiple visits. This works well for very vaccine hesitant parents and families. The goal is to continue to dialogue, but to place a priority on personal autonomy. Listen to the person, and then Ask, Acknowledge, Advise. Enhance their internal motivation for attitudinal change by exploring and solving inherent ambivalences.

The goal is to help the pregnant people become more open to getting vaccinated.

- You want them to talk about this out loud because talking actually changes how they process their choices and can develop forward momentum.
- People hesitant about vaccines usually have more practice explaining why they haven't gotten vaccinated, so it's good to reverse that. Ask them to express their vaccination benefits out loud.
- Be compassionate and curious about the persons mixed feelings, both the part of them that wants to trust that getting a vaccine is important and safe and the other part that feels hesitant. It is important to show support for the patient to incorporate their personal values and the health needs of their family and community as they make their decision.

Four Main Principles:

1. Empathize with the pregnant person: normalize concerns of reluctance
2. Roll with resistance: ask permission to clarify information, and don't argue or push ideas if the person is not ready
3. Develop discrepancy: note discrepancies in the conversation and listen for change talk
4. Support self-efficacy: demonstrate confidence in their ability to change

Motivational Interviewing includes four core communication skills that help create a psychologically safe environment for the person to explore their perception of readiness for and potential barriers to change.

| Core Skill                   | Purpose  | Example  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>O</b> pen-ended questions | Let the pregnant person discuss their story and fears related to vaccines                                    | Begin with “tell me what you know about vaccines in pregnancy”   |
| <b>A</b> ffirmations         | Affirming is acknowledging the person’s concerns or limitations  | “I can see this really concerns you”<br>“I can hear your ambivalence about vaccination”  |
| <b>R</b> eflection           | Reflective listening includes empathy and sensitivity about what feelings are being verbalized.              | “You are feeling unsure about getting the vaccine.”  |
| <b>S</b> ummary              | Summarize the conversation using three to four sentences. Summarizing allows clarification of misinformation | “It sounds like you are concerned about the side effects of the vaccine, and the possibility that the vaccine was rushed through FDA approval. Did I miss anything?” |

**Sources:**

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