# VACCINES 101 FOR WIC STAFF

Your quick-reference guide to talking with families about vaccines



# Your Role in Vaccine Conversations

- As WIC staff, you do not give medical advice, but you can talk about vaccines and help families find services
- WIC staff are often trusted messengers—especially for pregnant women and new parents



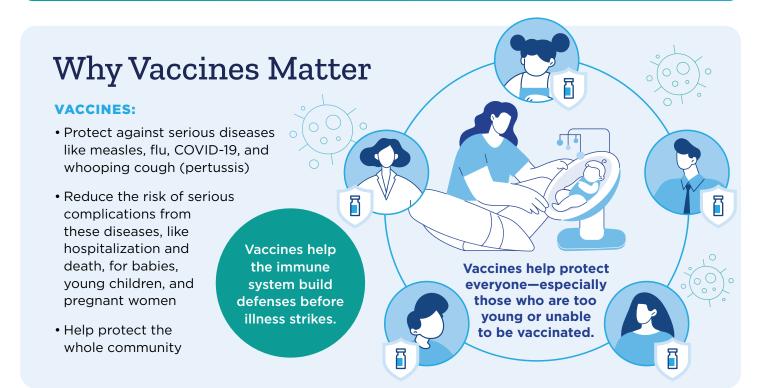
Here's how you can support families:

# **ENCOURAGE** -----→ **INFORM** -----→ **REFER**

Bring up vaccines in a friendly, non-judgmental way. Remind clients that staying on schedule protects their children, especially when they're young and most at-risk.

Share basic facts in plain language. Be prepared with printed materials, trusted links, and answers to common concerns.

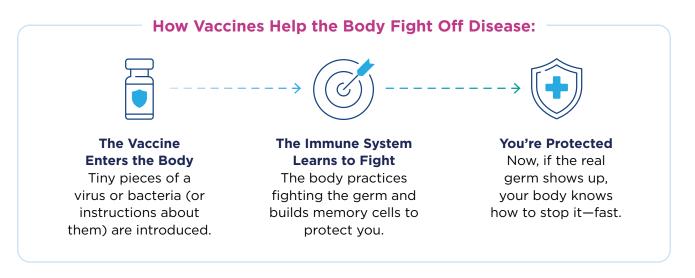
Offer to help parents find a provider, clinic, or immunization record. Use tools like QR codes, referral forms, and flyers.



# **How Vaccines Work**

#### **VACCINES:**

- Teach your immune system to recognize and fight infections
- Prevent serious diseases before they spread
- Help protect the whole community—especially babies and others who can't be vaccinated



# Overview of Vaccine Schedules

Recommended vaccine schedules are intended to provide timely protection for babies, children, adolescents, adults, and pregnant women. The table below represents an overview to discuss with your client.

It's recommended to acknowledge that these vaccine recommendations consider factors such as safety and effectiveness and potential disease severity. It's important that your clients discuss their individual vaccine recommendations with a trusted healthcare provider.

AGE GROUP	COMMON VACCINES AND PREVENTIVE ANTIBODIES
Birth-6 Years	COVID-19, chickenpox, DTaP, Hepatitis A/B, Hib, Influenza (Flu), MMR, pneumococcal, Polio, rotavirus, RSV antibody
<u>7-18 Years</u>	COVID-19, HPV, Influenza (Flu), Meningitis ACWY/B, Tdap
<u>Pregnant Women</u>	COVID-19, Influenza (Flu), RSV, Tdap (every pregnancy)
<u>Adults (Parents)</u>	COVID-19, Hepatitis B, Influenza (Flu), pneumococcal, RSV, shingles, Tdap/Td



Please refer to the linked immunization schedules in the table for each population for more detailed recommendations and definitions. They are also available to print!

# More Information About Vaccines During Pregnancy

Vaccines during pregnancy help babies stay protected after birth.

#### **RECOMMENDED:**

- Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis): Administer during each pregnancy, preferably between 26-36 weeks gestation, to protect newborns from whooping cough
- **Flu shot:** Recommended during any trimester of pregnancy, ideally by the end of October, to protect mother and baby from flu complications
- RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus): A single dose is recommended between 32 through 36 weeks gestation during September through January to protect infants from severe disease



#### **HIGHLY CONSIDER:**

 COVID-19: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) strongly recommends that pregnant women be vaccinated against COVID-19

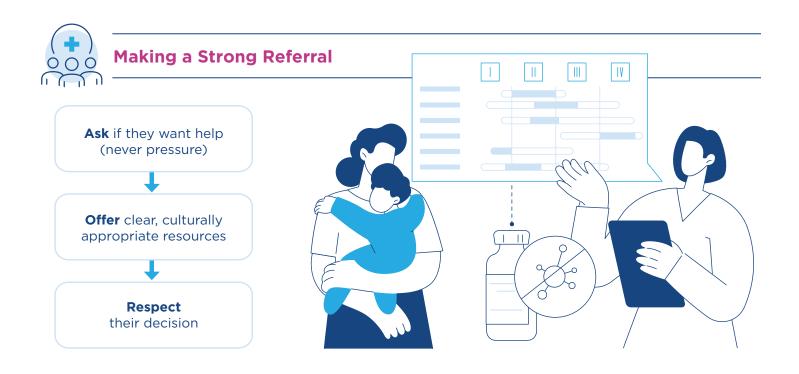
# Addressing Concerns, Responding to Questions, and Referrals & Resources



## **Common Questions & Examples of What to Say**

WIC staff don't need to debate or persuade—just offer facts, empathy, and referrals.

QUESTION/CONCERN	SUGGESTED RESPONSE
Are vaccines safe?	Yes. They're tested and monitored by health experts—both during development and after they've been approved.
Do vaccines cause autism?	No. Research shows vaccines are not linked to autism.
Why do babies get so many vaccines?	It may seem like a lot, but each one protects against a different serious disease. Babies are most vulnerable to disease, so the schedule is designed to protect them early.
How do I know vaccines will keep my baby safe?	That's such an important question. When you get vaccinated during pregnancy, your body makes antibodies that pass to your baby—like giving them a head start on protection before they're even born.
What if I missed some vaccines during the pandemic?	That's really common. Doctors can help you catch up safely. I can help you find a provider or clinic if you'd like.
Can't we just rely on natural immunity?	Natural infections can be risky—some cause serious illness or even death. Vaccines give your body protection so that you can avoid getting really sick.
What if I don't believe in vaccines?	I respect your choice. Would you like info or help with finding a provider you can talk more about this with to make the best decision for you and your family?



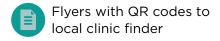
**EXAMPLE:** You've just finished talking with a parent about the importance of staying on schedule with vaccines. Their child is 18 months old, and they're unsure if they're up to date.



# Key elements of a strong referral:



### Helpful referral tools WIC staff can use:











# **Quick Tips + Resource List**

## Staff Tips for Conversations with Parents and Parents-to-Be:



### Ask open-ended questions, such as:

"What have you heard about vaccines?"

"Would you like more information or help finding a healthcare provider or clinic?"

Use and share trusted, ready-made tools such as QR codes, clinic lists, and printed schedules. Offer to look things up together if possible.

## Listen without judgment



- Stick to simple, positive messages
- Emphasize protection and safety
- Avoid medical jargon—focus on benefits ("Getting vaccinated protects you and your family.")

Let parents share concerns



- - Validate emotions without correcting or debating ("A lot of people wonder about that. You are not alone.")



#### Know your local resources.

Keep a short referral list handy (clinics, health departments).

Use consistent, calm toneeven if families are hesitant.

Bring it up again at their next visit. Even if they decline today, you can still check in later.

"Just a reminder—I can still help you with that if you're interested."

#### ADDITIONAL IMMUNIZATION RESOURCES:



Vaccinate Your Family Poster for Daycares and WIC Clinics



Vaccinate Your Family Parents/Parents-To-Be 2025 Resource -English -Spanish



Vaccinate Your Family VPD eBooks

-Child and Teen (English) -Child and Teen (Spanish) -Adult (English) -Adult (Spanish)

Vaccinate Your Family's "Vaccines Explained" videos



Vaccinate Your Family + Día de la Mujer Latina Fotonovela: Vaccines During Pregnancy



Talking to Parents About Vaccines



AAP's Healthy Children & AAP's Healthy Children in Spanish