

Got a vaccine-skeptical relative? Here's how to talk to them

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(HealthDay)—While more than 57 million doses of the COVID-19

vaccine have been given in the United States and many Americans eagerly await their turn to get a shot, not everyone wants one.

Vaccine skepticism isn't new, but you may be able to persuade skeptical loved ones to change their minds.

"Some people are probably thinking still that COVID-19 is like flu where you're sick for three or four days, and then you think you're fine after that," said Glen Nowak, director of the Center for Health and Risk Communication at the University of Georgia. "But research shows that many people's symptoms persist for weeks or even months, with loss of taste and smell frequently one of the symptoms experienced by those with 'mild' illness."

Key reasons for [vaccine hesitancy](#) are concerns about side effects, worry about the shot's rapid development and wanting to see what happens as more shots are administered.

To counter concerns about [side effects](#), Nowak suggested emphasizing that the risk of a bad reaction to the shot is low compared to the impact of getting COVID-19.

The most common reactions to the shot are sore arm, fever and feeling lousy a few days after vaccination. This pales in comparison to effects COVID-19 can have, which vary from mild to illness so severe it could land a person in the hospital, Nowak pointed out.

When talking about the speed of [vaccine](#) development, it's important to know that although the vaccines were developed and approved faster than any in [modern history](#), the science isn't new. Researchers had been developing vaccine platforms similar to the ones used by Pfizer and Moderna for well over a decade.

What was new was the amount of money invested by the government, which allowed vaccine development to happen all at once, rather than sequentially. Drawbacks are not yet having data regarding how well the available vaccines prevent the spread of infection and a lack of long-term data about how long immunity to the virus lasts.

"No corners were cut. So really what happened was this process became a lot more efficient in terms of doing the [clinical trials](#)," Nowak said in a university news release.

"Wait and see" is a common reaction to new vaccines, Nowak said, and that's understandable. Find out what your loved one wants to know about and try to answer those questions, he said.

Clinical trials for the COVID-19 vaccine enrolled tens of thousands of volunteers to test safety and effectiveness. Side effects tended to be mild and antibody levels and other immune responses against the virus were high. Early on, there were some concerns about a serious allergic reaction known as anaphylactic shock. But Nowak said as more people have taken the shots, the rates have fallen significantly.

"We all want to get back to what life was like before the pandemic, and the only way for everyone's lives to get back there is to be protected against COVID-19 illness," Nowak said. "And the best way to be protected in this COVID-19 illness is to get vaccinated."

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more information on [COVID-19 vaccines](#).

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