VACCINATIVE | Vaccination information for Natives by Natives

Overcoming Vaccination Fears

Getting vaccinated protects you and your community from many serious illnesses. However, some of us have fears about vaccines. These fears are normal, and it's okay to ask questions.

This handout is designed to help you address vaccination fears so you can take care of yourself and your community.

"Being vaccinated allows me to safely visit my Elders and create a safe environment for my children."

- M'Kya Bettega, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Mother and Public Health Student

Common Vaccination Fears

For some people, getting a vaccine is a simple task. For others, it might be difficult. Common fears about vaccination include fears about safety and fears about needles.

To Overcome Fears About Safety

Learn the facts – Each vaccine goes through several rounds of testing, which may take years and includes thousands of volunteers. Vaccines are approved for public use only after they are shown to be safe and effective. Once a vaccine is approved, everyday people who got the vaccine can share how it made them feel. This testing and continued monitoring ensure that vaccines are safe for everyone.

Be mindful of what you read online – The best sources of vaccine information are: current, updated regularly, reviewed by medical professionals, and based on scientific research. It's also important that the authors are listed (along with their credentials), and they say where their information comes from. Too often, the vaccine-related stories that become popular on social media spread false information.

To Overcome a Fear of Needles

Numb your arm – To help with any potential discomfort, use ice or over-the-counter lidocaine cream to numb your arm. If using a cream, be sure to apply it at least 30 minutes before the procedure.

"I come from a family of healers, so I've never been hesitant about vaccines. As a new mother, my sister, who was an RN, would often hold my babies when they got vaccinated. It was hard to watch them getting poked, but we both knew they needed these vaccines. Now as a Tribal Elder, I share information with my family, kids, and grandkids to make sure they get vaccinated."

– Sue Steward, MHL, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Grandmother, Mother, Elder, & Previous Healthcare Provider

Do breathing exercises – Focusing on your breathing can help relax your mind and body. Try box breathing, where you breathe in deeply through your nose while counting to four. Then hold your breath while counting to four. Then, slowly exhale for four seconds. Finally, hold your breath for four seconds. Repeat until you feel calm.

Engage your senses – Use your senses to engage with your surroundings. For example, list 5 things you see in the room, 4 sounds you hear, 3 things you smell, 2 things you taste, and 1 thing your fingers feel. Tuning into your senses can help turn down your fear response and keep you grounded.

Use distraction devices - You can also use different distraction tools, like the Buzzy Bee or the ShotBlocker. These distraction tools can be useful for both children and adults.

- The Buzzy Bee is a small, vibrating device that you press on your skin. The vibration distracts your brain and reduces any discomfort.
- The ShotBlocker is a small U-shaped device with small nubs on one side. When you place it on your skin (nubs-side down), it distracts your brain. Like the Buzzy Bee, this helps reduce any discomfort.

Stay in the Know

If you read or hear something you're unsure about when it comes to vaccines, ask a trusted health professional. Call or make an appointment. And ask what vaccination resources they have available. Also, visit www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative to get accurate vaccine info for Native people by Native people. You can also visit another trusted Tribal health resource.

Where to Get Vaccinated

To get vaccinated contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local pharmacy or clinic.

VacciNative

This handout was developed by VacciNative – a project dedicated to creating accurate vaccine information for Native people by Native people. We do this by gathering info from trusted Elders, Native health professionals, and other experts.

All of our materials are reviewed by the VacciNative Alliance, a collaboration of staff from Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the nation.

Additional Information

For additional information, check out www.IndianCountryECHO.org/VacciNative.
For questions, contact us at VacciNative@npaihb.org.

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