Patient Return: Talking with Your Patients About COVID-19 Vaccines

What to Say When a Patient Asks If Your Team Has Been Vaccinated

ADA strongly advocated for dentists and dental teams to be prioritized as 1a by the CDC when vaccine distribution began in December 2020. Because of this, you and some of your team may already be fully vaccinated, and patients may be asking for a number of different reasons. Use these considerations to help guide the conversation in a way that educates the patient but also protects you and your team:

Protect your team's privacy.

Offices have an obligation to protect everyone's health information — patients and staff. There may be cases where you or a team member cannot receive the vaccine for medical, religious or protected philosophical differences. If asked about your team's vaccination status, a simple response is, *"I can share that everyone on our staff has been very excited about the vaccine roll out."* If asked to provide further information, the dentist should decline, citing privacy reasons.

Sharing is voluntary.

If you have personally received the vaccine and are open to sharing, communicate relevant points that can help educate your patient about the experience, including where you went, what the process was like and how you felt after. This could be an impactful conversation for a patient who is hesitant about the vaccine. Team members who want to share their experiences can, but only if it is their choice. Leave the decision up to them.

Reinforce the importance of infection control.

Remind your patients and team that the vaccine protects the person who got it, and that we still don't know if those who are vaccinated can still spread the virus to others. This is a wonderful opportunity to talk about what really matters for the health and safety of your patients, your team and you is continuing to follow strict infection control protocols. Vaccinations are what will help with the much larger scale effort of stopping the spread of this pandemic. Patient communication materials to help guide infection control conversations are available at ADA.org/PatientReturn.

Foster an office culture of respect.

An employer can have private conversations with employees to learn if they have received the vaccine, but there should not be probing for the "why" behind an employee's reason for not being vaccinated unless the employee chooses to volunteer that information. As the leader of your dental team, foster a culture of respect and step in if you observe any type of pressure between team members about being vaccinated. Remind them that office infection control measures are most important and is something everyone can do to keep one another safe. Read more about legal issues in these employer vaccination FAQs and employee vaccination FAQs.