

# IMPROVING THE VACCINATION EXPERIENCE: A GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS



## THE CARD SYSTEM

The CARD system brings together everything we know about making vaccinations a more positive experience in a step-by-step process for healthcare providers to follow.

This factsheet explains how to plan and give vaccinations in a way that is patient-centred and promotes coping. It can also increase the likelihood your patients will complete recommended vaccination schedules, including COVID-19 vaccination.

Individuals with positive experiences will also be more likely to recommend vaccination to family members and others.

## GETTING STARTED

Provide your patients with their own CARD pamphlet for a more positive vaccination experience. Each letter category represents a different group of activities patients can play to have a better vaccination experience and reduce negative reactions. For more CARD tools visit <https://immunize.ca/card-adults>

### COMFORT

**Comfort** strategies include providing educational materials so people know what to expect and interventions that encourage serenity and physical ease.

Immunizers can pick vaccination settings that are aesthetically appealing and with comfortable seating. Inform individuals to wear a short-sleeved or loose-fitting top that is easy to pull up during injection.

### ASK QUESTIONS

**Asking questions** can help everyone to learn more about the vaccine and what to expect.

Many people are anxious because they do not have enough information. Invite people to ask questions and address their concerns.

Review vaccine communication and injection techniques to provide the best care possible.

### RELAX

**Relax** strategies help keep people calm. Immunizers can provide private spaces for vaccination, reduce visual cues that elicit fear (such as needles) and minimize excessive noise and activity to promote calmness.

Individuals can use techniques such as deep breathing or positive self-talk ('I can do this').

### DISTRACT

**Distract** strategies are used to take an individual's mind off the needle injection. Immunizers can ask individuals about their preferences.

For those that want to be distracted, they can recommend having a conversation with someone or using a cell phone.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR A CHECKLIST THAT HELPS WITH INTEGRATING CARD INTO YOUR VACCINATION PLANNING.

# VACCINATING WITH CARD CHECKLIST

## VACCINATION PREPARATION AND PLANNING

### 1. Ensure adequate clinic space

- Esthetic room, free of hazards
- Temperature control
- Accommodates equipment and supplies
- Comfortable seating for patient with ability to lie down
- Allows for privacy
- Allows for no interruptions
- Allows for ability to accommodate a support person with seating

### 2. Educate patients and other stakeholders (e.g. parents/guardians, teachers)

- CARD education (e.g. discussion, tools)
- Answer patient questions
- Book vaccination appointment

### 3. Vaccination day reminders

- Patients ask questions they have about vaccination or coping interventions
- Patients plan how they will play their selected coping strategies (e.g. bring cell phone to use as a distraction item, wear short-sleeved shirt to allow for easy access to arm and to increase comfort)

## VACCINATION DAY

### 1. Vaccination clinic set-up

- Use separate areas for waiting, vaccination and post-vaccination with chairs
- Allow for privacy (e.g., use window coverings, physical barriers)
- Ensure safety measures are in place to prevent transmission of infectious diseases (e.g., sanitization items, face coverings)
- Make sure patients have comfortable seating and are able to be in a reclining position
- Allow patients to use distraction aids or comfort items
- Allow patients to bring a support person
- Arrange seating at clinic tables so that patients do not face each other or equipment, and obscure frightening equipment from site (e.g., use towel, table-top poster)

### 2. Vaccination administration

- Foster a calm environment and be positive
- Review patients' medical history, including fainting and level of fear or worry about vaccination
- Answer patients' questions
- Communicate using neutral language. Do not use words that elicit fear (e.g. the needle "stings") and do not use repetitive reassurance (i.e. don't worry, it's ok, you'll be fine)
- Provide balanced information. Do not suggest that vaccination will not hurt; instead, describe sensations (e.g. "pressure" and "pinch") and duration (e.g. "about 1 second") and invite patients to report on how they feel
- Ask patients about their preferences. Do not impose coping interventions such as verbal distraction, taking deep breaths, looking

away during injection (these interventions are counter to preferred coping strategies of many individuals and lead to increased levels of fear or distress)

- Ask patients what CARDS they are playing and accommodate requests (e.g. topical anesthetic, support person, private room, injection of two vaccines in same arm)
- Provide distraction agents for patients that do not have them but would like to be distracted (in keeping with infection control and prevention guidelines)
- Ask patients about their preference with respect to the arm to vaccinate. If there is no preference, inject the non-dominant arm
- Ask patients about their preference with respect to injecting two vaccines in the same arm
- Encourage patients to relax their arm so that it is loose and jiggle
- Consider not using alcohol to cleanse the skin as this step is unnecessary, adds time and can increase anticipatory stress
- Inject patients sitting upright (on a parent's/guardian's lap if patient is a young child)
- Inject vaccines quickly, without aspiration
- If there are multiple injections, administer the most painful vaccine last
- Monitor patient symptoms after vaccination. Suggest muscle tension to patients who are dizzy or prone to fainting (this can be achieved by squeezing legs together) or lying down in a reclining chair or on a gym mat
- Counsel patient regarding post-injection reactions and use of acetaminophen
- Document symptoms and feedback to inform future vaccination

# PREPARING FOR YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE: A GUIDE FOR ADULTS

COVID-19 is a very infectious disease that can cause life-threatening illness. COVID-19 disease can affect anyone. However, it is more dangerous for older adults and those with underlying medical conditions. Being healthy does not reduce the risk of catching or passing on the disease. Infected people can pass it on to family and friends, who may be at increased risk of complications, including death.

Vaccines are medicines that teach the body to recognize germs that cause diseases. If the body comes in contact with the germs in the future, it will be able to stop them. There are several vaccines that are approved for use against COVID-19 disease in Canada. They require 2 separate needle injections for full protection, spread out by 3 – 4 weeks.

The COVID-19 vaccines have similar side effects to other vaccines. The vaccines commonly cause pain and tenderness in the arm, feeling tired, headache, and general aches. You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine.

Healthcare workers are being careful to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during vaccination. You will be asked to follow infection prevention safety measures also, including social distancing, wearing a facemask, and washing your hands frequently. You will also be asked to continue to follow the general advice of officials when you are at home or out and about. The vaccine takes time to work and it will take time to protect everyone in the community – public health infection prevention measures need to be followed.

## THE CARD SYSTEM



The CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract) can help you prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine and have a better vaccination experience. Each letter of the word CARD is a different category of activities you can do. This factsheet explains how to play your CARDS and includes information about what to expect and how to be ready. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions or if you have CARDS that require planning. Sign the permission form. You will be asked to agree again on the day of vaccination.

**SEE NEXT PAGE**

## PLAY YOUR CARDS...



Think about how you would like to be more comfortable during your COVID-19 vaccination. For example, you can choose...

- To sit up or lie down
- To wear a short-sleeved or loose-fitting top that is easy to pull up.



Talk to someone you trust, such as a family member or health care provider. You can ask questions about the vaccine or about what CARDS you can play. For example, you can ask...

- If I have had the flu vaccine, do I still need the COVID-19 vaccine? Yes. The flu vaccine does not protect you from COVID-19.
- Can someone keep me company during the procedure? Yes. Speak to your healthcare provider about arranging this.
- Can I use numbing creams? These are medicines applied to the skin ahead of time that dull the pain where the needle enters the skin. They are available without a prescription. They take 20-60 minutes to work, depending on the product, so plan ahead.
- Is there anything that can help minimize the sore arm or feelings of tiredness or general aches that can happen after vaccination? Yes. Take acetaminophen at the time of vaccination.
- What will happen if I get a fever? Take acetaminophen for fever or pain relief.



Think of ways that you normally keep yourself calm and relaxed. This helps to make vaccination a more positive experience because it lessens feelings of pain and fear. For example, you can choose...

- To listen to music that you find soothing
- To take slow deep breaths. This is like blowing up a balloon or blowing out candles. The belly should move out when breathing in and move in when breathing out.



Think of your preferences for what you want to do during the procedure. Do you like to be distracted or do you like to look at the needle? If you like to be distracted, you can choose...

- To use an object to get your mind off the needle (for example, use your cell phone)
- Talk to the nurse about something else.

## TIPS FOR VACCINATION DAY...

- Use the CARD system to make needles more comfortable: Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract.
- Try to eat something before vaccination and afterwards.
- You will receive the vaccine in the upper arm. Wear short sleeves or something easy to pull up so that the upper arm can be reached easily.
- Bring any supplies you need, such as a facemask and something to distract you.
- Be calm and positive.
- Do not tense your arm where the needle is going in – keep it loose or jiggle like cooked spaghetti.
- If you feel faint or get dizzy during needles, you can squeeze your knees together or lie down.
- Have acetaminophen available to treat common side effects. Let your health care provider know if you are experiencing any side effects that worry you.
- Keep a record of the vaccine you received and make an appointment for your second dose. Do not attend your next appointment if you are sick, self-isolating, or waiting for a COVID-19 test result. Try to get your second dose after you feel better and as soon as you are able to do so.

# PREPARING FOR YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE: A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS OF OLDER ADULTS



## THE CARD SYSTEM

COVID-19 is a very infectious disease that can cause life-threatening illness. COVID-19 disease can affect anyone.

However, it is more dangerous for older adults. Because of this, older adults are one of the first groups of people being offered the COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccinations are recurring health-related procedures. For most people, these procedures can cause unnecessary pain, stress and anxiety. The CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract) can prepare you for your loved one's COVID-19 vaccine injection. Each letter of the word CARD is a different category of activities you can play to help your loved one have a better experience. Use this factsheet to learn how to play your CARDS and talk with a health care provider if you have questions or if you use CARDS that require planning.

## PLAY YOUR CARDS

### COMFORT **C**

Review information factsheets like this one to know what to expect and ways you can make your loved one more comfortable during their COVID-19 vaccination.

What would make your loved one more comfortable? For example, you can arrange for your loved one to wear a short-sleeved or loose-fitting top that is easy to pull up. You can also arrange for your loved one to sit up or lie down during vaccination.



### ASK QUESTIONS **A**

Talk to someone you trust. You can ask questions about the vaccine or about what CARDS you can play.

For example, you can ask to be present during your loved one's vaccination. You can ask for medicine to dull the pain where the needle enters the skin. This medicine is available to everyone.



### RELAX **R**

Think of ways that normally keep your loved one calm and relaxed.

For example, your loved one can listen to music they find soothing. They can also take slow deep breaths. This is like blowing up a balloon or blowing out candles. The belly should move out when breathing in and move in when breathing out.



### DISTRACT **D**

Does your loved one like to be distracted or do they prefer to look at the needle?

If your loved one likes to be distracted during procedures, you can use an object to get their mind off the needle like looking at pictures, reading a magazine or talking to the nurse about something else.



SEE NEXT PAGE FOR VACCINATION DAY TIPS

# TIPS FOR VACCINATION DAY

- ◆ Use the CARD system to make needles more comfortable: **C**omfort, **A**sk, **R**elax, **D**istract.
- ◆ Try to have your loved one eat something before vaccination and afterwards.
- ◆ Your loved one will receive the vaccine in the upper arm. Wearing short sleeves or something easy to pull up will make it easier to reach the upper arm.
- ◆ Bring any supplies you need, such as something to distract your loved one.
- ◆ You will be asked to follow safety measures, including physical distancing, wearing a facemask, and washing your hands frequently.
- ◆ Be calm and positive.
- ◆ If your loved one feels faint or gets dizzy during needles, have them squeeze their legs together or lie down.
- ◆ Keep a record of the vaccine your loved one received. Your loved one's vaccination will be delayed if they are sick, self-isolating, or waiting for a COVID-19 test result. They will be given the vaccine as soon as they feel better.
- ◆ You will also be asked to continue to follow safety measures after the procedure and to follow the general advice of public health officials for when you are at home or out and about.

See other related material at <https://immunize.ca/card-adults>

# PREPARING FOR YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE: A GUIDE FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS



## THE CARD SYSTEM

Vaccinations are recurring health-related procedures. For most people, these procedures can cause unnecessary pain, stress and anxiety. The CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract) can help you prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine injection and have a better experience. Each letter of the word CARD is a different category of activities you can do. This factsheet explains how to play your CARDS and includes information about what to expect and how to be ready.

## PLAY YOUR CARDS

### COMFORT

**C**

Review information factsheets like this one to know what to expect and ways you can make your COVID-19 vaccination more comfortable.

What would make you more comfortable? For example, you can wear a short-sleeved or loose-fitting top that is easy to pull up. You can also sit up or lie down during vaccination.

**C**

### ASK QUESTIONS

**A**

Talk to someone you trust. You can ask questions about the vaccine or about what CARDS you can play.

For example, *Can I use numbing creams?* These are medicines that dull the pain where the needle enters the skin. They take 20-60 minutes to work, depending on the product, so plan ahead.

**A**

### RELAX

**R**

Think of ways that you normally keep yourself calm and relaxed.

For example, you can take slow deep breaths. This is like blowing up a balloon or blowing out candles. The belly should move out when breathing in and move in when breathing out.

**R**

### DISTRACT

**D**

Do you like to be distracted or do you like to look at the needle?

If you like to be distracted, you can use an object to get your mind off the needle like reading a magazine or talk to the nurse about something else.

**D**

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR VACCINATION DAY TIPS

# TIPS FOR VACCINATION DAY

- ◆ Use the CARD system to make needles more comfortable: **C**omfort, **A**sk, **R**elax, **D**istract.
- ◆ Try to eat something before vaccination and afterwards.
- ◆ You will receive the vaccine in the upper arm. Wear short sleeves or something easy to pull up so that the upper arm can be reached easily.
- ◆ Bring any supplies you need, such as something to distract you.
- ◆ You will be asked to follow safety measures, including physical distancing, wearing a facemask, and washing your hands frequently.
- ◆ Do not tense your arm where the needle is going in – keep it loose or jiggly like cooked spaghetti.
- ◆ If you feel faint or get dizzy during needles, you can squeeze your knees together or lie down.
- ◆ Have acetaminophen available to treat common side effects. Let your health care provider know if you are experiencing any side effects that worry you.
- ◆ Keep a record of the vaccine you received. Do not attend your appointment if you are sick, self-isolating, or waiting for a COVID-19 test result. Try to get vaccinated as soon as you can after you feel better.
- ◆ You will be asked to continue to follow safety measures at your workplace after vaccination, such as wearing personal protective equipment. You will also be asked to continue to follow the general advice of officials for when you are at home or out and about.

See other related material at <https://immunize.ca/card-adults>



# PREPARING FOR YOUR COVID-19 VACCINE: A GUIDE FOR PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS



## THE CARD SYSTEM

COVID-19 is a very infectious disease that can cause life-threatening illness. Healthcare workers and personal support workers working in social care, particularly in care homes, are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 at work. They can pass it on to family, friends and residents, who may be at increased risk of complications, including death. Being healthy does not reduce the risk of catching or passing on the disease. Because of this, personal support workers working in social care are one of the first groups of people being offered the COVID-19 vaccine.

Vaccinations are recurring health-related procedures. For most people, these procedures can cause unnecessary pain, stress and anxiety. The CARD system (Comfort, Ask, Relax, Distract) can help you prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine injection and have a better vaccination experience. Each letter of the word CARD is a different category of activities you can do. Use this factsheet to learn how to play your CARDS and talk with a health care provider if you have questions or if you use CARDS that require planning.

## PLAY YOUR CARDS

### COMFORT **C**

Review information factsheets like this one to know what to expect and ways you can make your COVID-19 vaccination more comfortable.

What would make you more comfortable? For example, you can wear a short-sleeved or loose-fitting top that is easy to pull up. You can also sit up or lie down during vaccination.

**C**

### ASK QUESTIONS **A**

Talk to someone you trust. You can ask questions about the vaccine or about what CARDS you can play.

For example, *Can I use numbing creams?* These are medicines that dull the pain where the needle enters the skin. They take 20-60 minutes to work, depending on the product, so plan ahead.

**A**

### RELAX **R**

Think of ways that you normally keep yourself calm and relaxed.

For example, you can take slow deep breaths. This is like blowing up a balloon or blowing out candles. The belly should move out when breathing in and move in when breathing out.

**R**

### DISTRACT **D**

Do you like to be distracted or do you like to look at the needle?

If you like to be distracted, you can use an object to get your mind off the needle like reading a magazine or talk to the nurse about something else.

**D**

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR VACCINATION DAY TIPS

# TIPS FOR VACCINATION DAY

- ◆ Use the CARD system to make needles more comfortable: **C**omfort, **A**sk, **R**elax, **D**istract.
- ◆ Try to eat something before vaccination and afterwards.
- ◆ You will receive the vaccine in the upper arm. Wear short sleeves or something easy to pull up so that the upper arm can be reached easily.
- ◆ Bring any supplies you need, such as something to distract you.
- ◆ You will be asked to follow safety measures, including physical distancing, wearing a facemask, and washing your hands frequently.
- ◆ Do not tense your arm where the needle is going in – keep it loose or jiggly like cooked spaghetti.
- ◆ If you feel faint or get dizzy during needles, you can squeeze your knees together or lie down.
- ◆ Have acetaminophen available to treat common side effects. Let your health care provider know if you are experiencing any side effects that worry you.
- ◆ Keep a record of the vaccine you received. Do not attend your appointment if you are sick, self-isolating, or waiting for a COVID-19 test result. Try to get vaccinated as soon as you can after you feel better.
- ◆ You will be asked to continue to follow safety measures at your workplace after vaccination, such as wearing personal protective equipment. You will also be asked to continue to follow the general advice of officials for when you are at home or out and about.

See other related material at <https://immunize.ca/card-adults>