For Clinicians December 2025

# How to Talk to Staff About New Vaccines

Talking with staff and residents about a preventive vaccine – especially a new one – is different from recommending a treatment. It takes time to build the educational foundation about the disease target, vaccine efficacy and safety, and how specific recommendations apply to your residents.

Long-term care (LTC) staff play an important role in residents' lives. They are devoted to resident care, safety, and health. **Investing in staff training and education as soon as a vaccine is approved (even before it is offered in the facility) builds trust and increases acceptance.** Staff can be the best champions for new health measures and trusted sources of information for questions and concerns.

## Communications Approach

Use the same basic communication framework you use with residents, tailored to staff members' knowledge, professional roles, and responsibilities. When speaking to staff or residents about new vaccines, follow the steps below, using a hypothetical vaccine to prevent *C. diff* infection as an example.

**Understand Your Audience: LTC Staff**

- Recognize they work with residents and are invested in quality care.
- Deliver information about innovations in vaccines during paid time, such as in-staff trainings.
- Educate staff as soon as a vaccine is approved – even if it is not yet offered in the facility - to build support. The goal is to prevent staff, residents, and families from feeling like they never heard of a new vaccine before asking them to administer or receive it.
- Respect their roles in the facility and that everyone can be trusted sources of vaccine information for residents and their community.

**Define Your Single Overriding Communications Objective**

- Staff understand that *C. diff* is a serious threat to older resident and vaccination (once available) can help protect both residents and the facility.

**Support Your Message with Key Facts**

- *C. diff* infections are more frequent in healthcare settings, putting LTC residents at an increased risk.
- Older adults and people with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable.
- Provide data on the new vaccine's efficacy and safety alongside prevention measures.

**Use Your Key Message to Frame Responses to Questions**

- Be prepared to explain a new vaccine's efficacy, safety, rare potential adverse events, safety monitoring, and ACIP/professional recommendations.
- Consider using a personal story from your professional history with a *C. diff* outbreak or a resident who experienced infection.
- Listen and connect back to *C. diff's* serious consequences for residents and the value of a vaccine as a tool for prevention.

## Tips for Success

**Be Open and Honest:** We know from health communications science that building trust requires honest, two-way communication where everyone feels free to ask questions and get evidence-based responses. Take this approach in staff training. Ensure staff members' questions are heard and answered using plain language that staff can easily share with residents.

**Make It Easy:** Provide staff with simple talking points and FAQs to guide conversations with residents, their families, and peers.

**Respect Their Time:** Make sure any educational sessions are during paid work hours or in-service trainings that acknowledge staff's busy lives outside work.