



# Doses of Hope: Honest Conversations About the COVID-19 Vaccine

## *Ambassador Toolkit*

### Thank you.

Your acknowledgment and support of this initiative is deeply appreciated. These efforts are critical to advance our mission to improve the health status of the communities we serve. With your support, we can make an impact throughout Los Angeles and beyond.

This toolkit provides templates to help you communicate with your team, your patients and the public. Of course, because you know your audiences best, all materials can be customized based on your unique situation. The enclosed materials are meant to be a starting point and a resource to ensure you feel both knowledgeable and confident conducting outreach and your messages are based in the latest scientific evidence and medical facts.

### Included in this packet are the following materials:

- Strategy Snapshot
- Your Role as an Ambassador
- Communications Best Practices
- Talking Points and FAQ
- Email and Phone Scripting
- Supporting Materials
- Links to Resources and Partners

## Strategy Snapshot: Bringing Our Mission to Life

As the pandemic continues to disproportionately impact communities of color and certain other demographics, Cedars-Sinai is committed to improving the health status of the most vulnerable by building relationships, and ultimately trust, to curtail vaccine hesitancy.

We are mobilizing a strategy to accomplish this by:

- Seeking new and strengthening existing partnerships with media, faith leaders and community organizations
- Engaging and equipping Cedars-Sinai ambassadors to share messages around COVID-19 vaccine safety and general preventive health issues
- Leveraging our internal and external communications channels to educate the community

## Your Role as an Ambassador



Be an active source of truth for reliable information on vaccine safety



Share your personal vaccination story – how and why you accepted the vaccine



Provide feedback on what you hear from patients, peers and the community

## A Few Dos and Don'ts

### DO

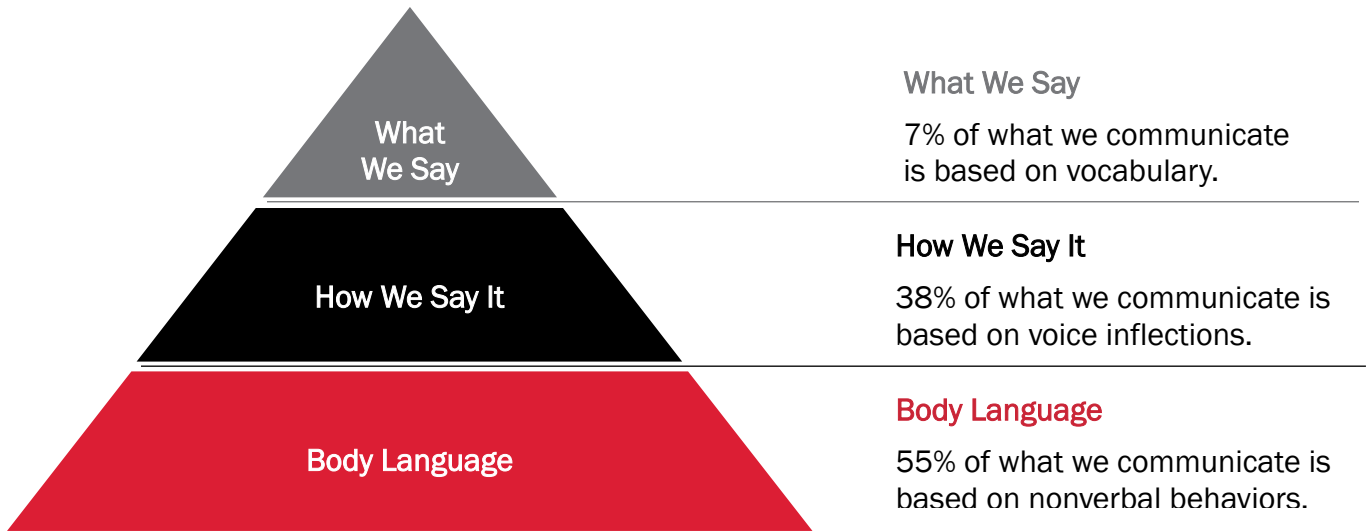
- Keep our mission in mind.
- Proactively seek opportunities to share your story and expertise.
- Practice active listening. Work to understand the concerns and feelings of your audience before responding.
- Review this resource and incorporate the language into your daily conversations.
- Help create confidence in vaccine safety and effectiveness.

### DON'T

- Speculate about a person's attitude toward the vaccine because of their race, age, political views, ethnicity or religion.
- Dismiss questions or concerns for any reason.
- Assume your audience is aware of vaccine development, testing or access.
- "Blame" vaccine accessibility challenges on people or institutions.

# Communications Best Practices

As you engage with patients, peers and communities about vaccine safety – whether over the phone, video or in person – keep in mind that how you deliver a message is often even more important than the words you use.



Framing Topics	
<p><b>1. Give Context - <i>The Why</i></b> We understand there are people in our community who don't have a lot of faith in healthcare institutions, medical researchers or the government. Together, mistrust and vaccine-related confusion can make it challenging to decide what's best for you and your loved ones.</p>	<p><b>2. Provide Details - <i>The What</i></b> Cedars-Sinai is dedicated to improving the health status of our community - through the pandemic and beyond. We have resources and experts that are ready, willing and able to answer your questions and connect you with information about your options for protection against COVID-19.</p>
<p><b>3. Give Next Steps - <i>The Action</i></b> Regardless of your ultimate decision on vaccination, we want to share information and resources with you to help you make an informed choice for you and your family.</p>	<p><b>4. Summarize Points - <i>The Recap</i></b> The vaccines are an important opportunity to keep your family safe and end the pandemic.</p>

# Talking Points & Frequently Asked Questions

*The below conversation starters, talking points and FAQ can be used when communicating with patients, peers and the community about the COVID-19 vaccine.*

## Conversation Starters

*As people respond to the conversation, use the FAQ below to help answer their questions.*

- » How are you feeling about the vaccine?
- » Do you know anyone who has received the vaccine?
- » Do you think you'll get the vaccine?
- » What have you heard about the vaccine rollout so far?
- » Do you think your grandparents/relatives will get the vaccine?
- » What does the vaccine mean to you?

## Talking Points

- » We understand there are people in our community who don't have a lot of faith in healthcare institutions, medical researchers or the government.
- » Mistrust and vaccine-related confusion can make it challenging to decide what's best for you and your loved ones.
- » Regardless of your ultimate decision on vaccination, we want to share information and resources with you to help you make an informed choice for you and your family.
- » Cedars-Sinai is dedicated to improving the health status of our community - through the pandemic and beyond. We have resources and experts that are ready, willing and able to answer your questions and connect you with information about your options for protection against COVID-19.
- » The vaccines are an important opportunity to keep your family safe and end the pandemic – to get back to precious activities more quickly, like birthdays, weddings and reunions with loved ones.
- » The vaccine remains one of our most important, safe and effective options to fight the pandemic and protect our most vulnerable family members and neighbors.
- » On April 12, 2021, out of an abundance of caution, the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended a pause on the use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine. This recommendation was made after six people in the U.S. developed rare blood clots about two weeks after the vaccine was given. This pause demonstrates the ongoing intense scrutiny and monitoring being applied to each of the vaccines. The pause was lifted on April 23, 2021 after concluding that the benefits of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine vastly outweigh the potential risks to individuals.

- » In December of 2020 the U.S. FDA authorized the first vaccine to combat COVID-19. In August of 2021, the U.S. FDA fully approved the COVID-19 vaccine, ensuring it meets the highest standards for safety and effectiveness.
- » All of the vaccines remain extremely effective at preventing the really bad outcomes we can see with COVID-19.
- » Whether you decide to get vaccinated or not, please continue taking safety precautions like wearing a mask, physical distancing and washing your hands frequently. These are important habits to maintain in order to protect others who are still vulnerable to the virus.
- » Additionally, we encourage you to schedule any skipped medical appointments from this past year to make sure you remain up to date on important care activities.
- » You're welcome to share this information and other helpful content with your friends and family. Talk about what you are learning related to this decision – your motivations and concerns – and discuss your experience so that others can use it to make their own decision.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*The below represent frequently asked and anticipated questions on vaccine safety, vaccine efficacy and vaccine access.*

### Vaccine Safety

**Q: Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** If your doctor recommends it, yes!

**Q: Should pregnant people get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** Yes! The COVID-19 vaccine is effective and safe for pregnant people to receive ([source](#)). Multiple studies have shown that the COVID-19 vaccine protects pregnant people from the virus just as it does non-pregnant people.

There is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 vaccines cause harm to the infant, and preliminary research indicates that vaccinated pregnant people pass on COVID-19 antibodies to their infants through the umbilical cord and breastmilk ([source](#)) which can help protect the infants from contracting COVID-19. If you are planning to become pregnant, there is also no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems in women or men.

**Q: How safe is the COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** The COVID-19 vaccines were well tested for safety before being made available in the United States, and the technology behind these vaccines has been studied for more than a decade. California has its own Scientific Safety Review Workgroup comprised of experts in immunology, public health, academia and others making sure it is safe for residents.

The COVID-19 vaccines are going through the same safety testing and are required to meet the same standards as other vaccines – like those for the flu, chickenpox and polio that have been widely offered for many years.

**Q: Are the vaccines likely to make me sick or cause dangerous side effects?**

**A:** No. But similar to most vaccines, the Pfizer, Moderna and J&J vaccines can cause side effects like pain, swelling and redness at the injection site or headaches, chills, muscle pain and fatigue. These mild-to-moderate side effects typically resolve in 1-2 days. In very rare cases, severe allergic reactions have occurred, but medical personnel are trained to monitor for these reactions.

These vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history – using the best of established strategies as well as innovative new ones. They are helping protect millions of people and continue to be actively monitored – as highlighted by the temporary pause on the J&J vaccine distribution after only 6 reported rare events. The CDC and the FDA have since concluded that the benefits of the J&J vaccine still vastly outweigh the risk of rare, adverse side effects.

**Q: What is in the COVID-19 vaccine?**

**A:** The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine contains mRNA, lipids, salts and sugar. ([Source](#))

- » **mRNA** – Also known as messenger ribonucleic acid, mRNA is the only active ingredient in the vaccine. The mRNA contains the instructions for our body on how to react, fight and beat the coronavirus.
- » **Lipids** – Lipid is just fat that protects the mRNA. The names for the fats may be hard to pronounce, but they're really good at coating the mRNA.
  - (4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis
  - (2-hexyldecanoate), 2 [(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide
  - 1,2-Distearoyl-snglycero-3- phosphocholine
  - Cholesterol
- » **Salts** – Salts are added to the Pfizer vaccine and help balance the acidity in your body.
  - Potassium chloride
  - Monobasic potassium phosphate
  - Sodium chloride
  - Dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate
- » **Sugar** – Sugar helps the molecules maintain their shape during freezing.

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine has much of the same ingredients as the Pfizer vaccine: mRNA, lipids, salt and sugar, but it also has acids and acid stabilizers to help preserve the vaccine once it's produced. ([Source](#))

The Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine contains similar ingredients: Instructions for defense and ingredients that protect and preserve those instructions. ([Source](#))

- » **Adenovirus:** This ingredient contains the instructions for your body's cells to learn how to react, fight and beat the coronavirus
- » **Preservatives and stabilizers:** Acid (citric acid monohydrate), Salt (trisodium citrate dihydrate), ethanol, Lipid (2-hydroxypropyl- $\beta$ -cyclodextrin (HBCD)), Emulsifier (polysorbate-80), Salt (sodium chloride)

In all three currently authorized vaccines, there are no ingredients or traces of animals (no gelatin, no egg white) and do not contain any blood products or thimerosal (mercury).

**Q: How is a viral vector vaccine (Johnson & Johnson) different from the mRNA (Pfizer and Moderna) options?**

**A:** Viral vector vaccines and mRNA vaccines take slightly different approaches to accomplish the same thing – trigger your own body to get ready to fight off a potential infection. The main difference is the number of doses required. Both vaccines are an effective way to defend yourself and protect your loved ones against COVID-19.

Rather than using genetic code (RNA) to encourage your immune system to start defending itself, the J&J vaccine uses a non-replicating virus to create a special spike protein. This type of vaccine has been studied for decades. ([Read more](#))

The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are each about 95% effective, but require 2 doses – 21 and 28 days apart, respectively. Preliminary data demonstrate that these mRNA vaccines are effective at preventing asymptomatic infection. ([Read more](#)) The J&J vaccine is 85% effective at preventing severe COVID-19 cases but requires only a single dose. ([Read more](#))

**Q: Should I get the vaccine if I have allergies?**

**A:** You should talk to your doctor if you have concerns about the vaccine, especially related to your personal health history. Your physician can help you learn more about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine and how being vaccinated can contribute to your personal health and wellness.

**Q: Should I be concerned that the J&J vaccine was put on hold earlier this year?**

**A:** No. If anything, the temporary pause after only 6 reported cases of blood clots demonstrated that the FDA and CDC are taking extreme care to monitor and investigate all reported side effects for each of the vaccines. The pause provided the time necessary for scientists to fully evaluate how the J&J vaccine might or might not be associated with this rare adverse event. The CDC and FDA have since concluded that the benefits of the J&J vaccine still vastly outweigh the risk of rare, adverse side effects.

**Q: If I've received the J&J vaccine, should I be worried about blood clots?**

**A:** More than 6.8 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine have been administered in the U.S. The 6 reported adverse events under investigation occurred about 2 weeks following the vaccine. Those who have received the J&J vaccine in the last three weeks should watch for any symptoms of the rare blood clots, including severe headaches, abdominal or leg pain and shortness of breath. Anyone who develops these symptoms should contact their medical provider.

## Vaccine Efficacy

**Q: Which COVID-19 vaccine should I get?**

**A:** Whichever one you can receive first. All COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at protecting you from getting a severe case of COVID-19, being hospitalized or dying from the disease.

**Q: Will the vaccine keep me from getting COVID-19?**

**A:** The vaccine seriously reduces your chances of getting COVID-19 by teaching your body how to protect itself against the virus. It's important to remember that efficacy rates are applied to your individual risk, which is based on things like age and underlying conditions.

All the vaccines are extremely effective at preventing the really bad outcomes we can see with COVID-19. For example, if a vaccine has an efficacy rate of 66%, many people think that means they'll still have a 34% risk of getting sick with COVID-19 after being immunized. That's not true! Their risk will actually be much lower. A 66% efficacy rate means your risk of getting sick, whatever it was before getting vaccinated, is reduced by 66%. Let's say you were at high risk to begin with, due to your age or underlying conditions. Even if your risk was 25%, which is high, the vaccine would reduce your risk of becoming sick to 8.5% (a 66% reduction from 25%).

No vaccine will prevent all infections; however, the COVID-19 vaccine trials have shown that these vaccines dramatically reduce the risk of infections, and most importantly, reduce the risk of serious infections or COVID-related death to nearly zero.

**Q: How do the mRNA (Pfizer and Moderna) vaccines work to protect me?**

**A:** Unlike some traditional vaccines that use a virus to spark your immune system, the mRNA vaccines use a critical protein to train your own body to defend against the virus. It does not contain a live virus and cannot cause you to get COVID-19.

Essentially, the vaccine gives your body instructions on how to make a special protein that helps you fight the virus. ([Read more](#)) Your cells read those instructions, set up structures, begin making that protective protein and then discard the instructions.

As you produce these proteins, it encourages your body to make antibodies and activate your defensive cells. ([Read more](#)) Your body is smart and will remember how to quickly produce these defenses in the future. That way, if you are exposed to the virus, your body is ready to defend you.

**Q: Were the vaccines tested on people of color?**

**A:** Yes. While there is much work to be done on representing minorities in medical trials, many people of color participated in the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccine trials. ([Source](#))

Efficacy was consistent across age, gender, race and ethnicity demographics. ([Source](#)) More than 15,000 Black/African American individuals participated in the vaccine trials, and many more have been vaccinated since then.

**Q: I've heard about some new strains and variants of COVID-19 emerging, what do we know about these?**

**A:** Current findings indicate that the COVID-19 vaccine is effective against many of the new strains and variants. However, there is still more to learn. Reaching herd immunity by having enough of the population vaccinated is our greatest defense against the virus and the increasing threat of virus variants. All viruses are constantly mutating, so, the more virus there is circulating, the more mutations will occur. Vaccination is really the only way to limit the mutations. People who are not vaccinated need to be responsible, disclose that to others, wear a mask, and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

**Q: Will getting the vaccine get us back to normal?**

**A:** Eventually, yes! While cases are still high and few people are vaccinated, it's best to continue to wear a mask and physically distance from people outside your home. But the sooner a community is vaccinated, the sooner we can return to normalcy.



**Q: What is herd immunity and how can it impact my community?**

**A:** Herd immunity is the point at which enough people are protected – either through vaccines or from contracting and surviving COVID-19 – against a disease that it cannot spread easily through a population. It does not mean the disease is gone.

COVID-19 herd immunity is a moving target. It is dependent on many changing factors, so we cannot be certain when our communities will reach and maintain this immunity level. You and your family can contribute to herd immunity by getting vaccinated when you are eligible. This is the most effective way to protect yourself against the virus and ensure you are not spreading it to others.

**Q: If I still have to wear a mask at work or in public, why would I get the vaccine?**

**A:** While vaccination significantly reduces your chances of developing symptoms, it is not 100% effective and it may still be possible to get infected. This might contribute to the continued spread of COVID-19 while others await vaccination. For now, it is important to continue to use all of the methods available to prevent COVID-19 spread.

## Vaccine Access

**Q: When can I get the vaccine?**

**A:** All people 12 and older are eligible to receive the vaccine, though supplies of the vaccines change quickly. Visit the [COVID-19 section](#) of our website for regular updates and, if you haven't already, please take a moment to install the Cedars-Sinai app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. The [LA Public Health Department](#) is another good resource for up-to-date information.

**Q: How much will the vaccine cost?**

**A:** Nothing. Anyone can receive the vaccine for free. Additional information can be found on the State of California's [COVID-19 website](#) (COVID19.CA.gov).

**Q: Who should not get the vaccine?**

**A:** The Pfizer vaccine can be given to those age 12 and older, while the Moderna and J&J vaccine can be given to those 18 and older. Immunocompromised patients can and should receive the vaccine, but it should be received as a result of shared decision making with their provider to ensure optimal timing in relation to immunosuppression. Those who are allergic to any of the ingredients of the COVID-19 vaccine should check with their physician for vaccine guidance related to their personal health history.

## Vaccine Verification

**Q: What is a COVID-19 vaccination card?**

**A:** The CDC issues a small card verifying each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to record your vaccination. This card also serves as an appointment reminder to individuals needing to return for a second dose of an mRNA vaccine.

**Q: What should I do with a vaccination card?**

**A:** Be sure to bring it with you to any follow-up vaccination appointments. Otherwise, you should keep vaccination cards stored in a safe, dry place. It's also recommended to store a digital picture of your card in case you misplace it. Currently, there are no requirements tied to vaccination cards. However, in the future, your card might serve as helpful verification of vaccination for employment, travel opportunities or potential “booster” doses.

**Q: Is this card the only proof of my vaccination?**

**A:** No. Record of your vaccination will be saved electronically with the healthcare organization, clinic, pharmacy or county health department that provides your vaccine. ([Read more](#)) However, electronic systems and databases do not always share information with each other. For your own records, your CDC vaccine card will be important to document each vaccine administration – particularly if you received your doses at different locations.

## Email and Phone Scripting

*The below text can be used as an email or phone script when communicating about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine. This communication will be most effective when personalized with your own stories and resources you trust.*

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Dear [audience],

I am grateful to be working at an organization that recognizes the complexity of the decision to get vaccinated for many community members. This decision is a very personal one, but I believe vaccination presents an important opportunity to keep ourselves and our families safe.

*Select an option that best fits your audience*

- » I chose to get the vaccine because [describe personal reason and story]. The science behind the vaccines is strong and has undergone rigorous testing to ensure safety.
- » I know this is near and dear to you and your family. With loved ones still working in person as essential workers, you might have increased risk of exposure. Thank you for your dedication to our community. I hope you will consider getting the vaccine.
- » As someone I consider a friend, I am urging you to learn about the vaccines, stay current on the latest news and make an informed decision for yourself and your family. Please consider getting vaccinated – not just to protect yourself, but to protect your loved ones and community as well.

Below, you will find several reliable sources for information about the vaccine – not only from Cedars-Sinai, but from other sources as well.

- [Cedars-Sinai.org](https://www.cedars-sinai.org)
- [Blog post – COVID-19 Vaccine Efficacy: Clearing Up Confusion](#)
- [Blog post – The COVID-19 Vaccine: 9 Tips for a Smooth Experience](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov)

Should you decide to get the vaccine, Cedars-Sinai remains committed to sharing resources and tools that help you locate and understand the process to receive the shot when it's your turn.

- [California Department of Public Health – COVID-19 Vaccination: Find out if it's your turn](#)
- [LA County Department of Public Health – Appointments and vaccine distribution data](#)
- [Blog post – 5 Mood-Lifting Tips to Boost Your Response to Vaccination](#)
- [Blog post – Techniques to Help You Overcome a Fear of Needles](#)

Please feel free to share these resources with your social circles and encourage your friends and loved ones to take a look. I hope you find them helpful, and am happy to talk more about vaccine safety, efficacy and access any time.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any additional questions.

Thanks,

[signature]

# Supporting Materials

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## Social Media Content

*Please feel free to use and customize the following for your personal social media channels.*

- Want to get the vaccine? Visit [myturn.ca.gov/](https://myturn.ca.gov/) to schedule an appointment now.
- To learn about vaccine updates, visit the Cedars-Sinai Patient Update [here](#).
- Did you know the three authorized COVID-19 vaccines are vegetarian? They only contain very basic ingredients: the genetic instructions, salt, fat, sugar, and acids.
- I got the COVID-19 vaccine to protect my family and friends. Learn more about how it works: <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/clearing-up-covid-19-vaccine-efficacy-confusion.html>
- Did you know the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccines all contain very basic ingredients, like the genetic instructions, salt, fat, sugar and acids?
- The best way to protect your family from COVID-19 is to get the vaccine and continue to mask-up and physically distance from people outside your home.
- I got the COVID-19 vaccine to protect my family and friends. Learn more about how it works: <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/clearing-up-covid-19-vaccine-efficacy-confusion.html>
- I did my research, and I chose to get the vaccine because **[insert personal reason]**.

## Social Media Graphics

*The attached graphics are intended to accompany ambassador social posts for a grassroots information push. Shared on personal social channels, like LinkedIn, these posts can generate awareness and gently share information associated with the Cedars-Sinai brand within target communities.*

## Vaccine Development Infographic

*The attached infographic visually depicts the vaccine development process at a high level. This is a way to spread awareness and understanding about the vaccine among your network. For example, this can easily accompany social posts or be included on other channels.*

## Vaccine Development Poster

*The attached poster offers a more detailed explanation of the vaccine development journey. It is intended to increase understanding and confidence in the process.*

## Links to Resources and Partners

You may have friends or family who remain wary of the vaccine. For a variety of reasons, it can be challenging to decide on the best path forward - for yourself and your loved ones. Cedars-Sinai is dedicated to improving the health status of our community through the pandemic and beyond, and our goal is to connect people with timely, reliable information to help them make an informed choice.

We are grateful to have experts like you who are ready, willing and able to answer questions and connect people with resources to stay safe and healthy during this pandemic. To make the biggest impact, we've also put together a list of resources from several local and national organizations to foster additional understanding.

As you have conversations about vaccine safety and acceptance, please feel free to direct people to the following resources for additional, up-to-date information.

### Local Resources and Partners

- [LA County Department of Public Health – Appointments and vaccine distribution data](#)
- [California Department of Public Health – COVID-19 Vaccination: Find out if it's your turn](#)
- [Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital – Facts at your fingertips](#)
- [Cedars-Sinai.org](#)
- [Blog post – COVID-19 Vaccine Efficacy: Clearing Up Confusion](#)
- [Blog post – The COVID-19 Vaccine: 9 Tips for a Smooth Experience](#)
- [Blog post – 5 Mood-Lifting Tips to Boost Your Response to Vaccination](#)
- [Blog post – Techniques to Help You Overcome a Fear of Needles](#)

### National Resources and Partners

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [U.S. Food & Drug Administration](#)
- [Blackdoctor.org](#)