

MESSAGING TIPS BLACK AUDIENCES DO'S & DON'TS

Across the country, COVID-19 is having devastating effects. Many of us are working on vaccine education programs because we know they can help turn the tide on the pandemic by ensuring vaccine education materials (like newsletter articles and social media posts) use messaging that help Black Americans learn more about the vaccines. Here are some recommended guidelines, based on the Ad Council's research with Black audiences, to use when developing COVID-19 vaccine education messaging.

COMMUNICATION DO'S & DON'TS

Do

Use visual images with diverse representation so readers will see "people like us" – with a variety of body types, skin tones and hair styles.

Create education materials in multiple languages to reflect the language preferences of your organization's members or the residents of your community.

Encourage asking questions about COVID-19 vaccines as its empowering and demonstrates self-care.

Address frequently asked questions, for example, about pre-existing conditions (i.e. hypertension, diabetes, obesity, lupus) and the vaccines. Information needs to be clear, honest and presented in plain language. Facts about safety are important.

Don't

Rely solely on photos and illustrations that don't represent the diverse population that is part of your community or organization.

Solely produce English materials if your neighborhood or membership includes a mix of people whose roots are African or Caribbean and may have limited English proficiency.

Frame asking questions as a negative. Many people have valid concerns about COVID-19 vaccines and simply want the answers. Ad Council research showed that Black women, who are often lead decision-makers in households, have a number of questions.

Just say "the science is solid."

MESSAGING TIPS

COMMUNICATION DO'S & DONT'S

Do

Share that researchers made sure that the clinical trials included adults of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas. They collaborated with faith leaders, community organizations, and health clinics to reach volunteers from many different walks of life across the United States.

Acknowledge low confidence in vaccines among Black Americans is partly due to concerns about safety and side effects and distrust of government. Also, worries are in part linked to historical unethical practices in medical research (i.e. Tuskegee experiments) as well as systemic health care inequities, especially laid bare by the pandemic.

Don't

Indicate that Black people were not included in clinical trials.

Simply say Black Americans have higher rates of hesitancy without explaining why nor imply that vaccination uptake rests entirely on their shoulders.

LANGUAGE TIPS: DO'S & DONT'S

Do Say

It's important to get the COVID-19 vaccines to make it harder for the disease to spread.

COVID-19

"Vaccines" (plural), or refer to "vaccinations" or "immunization" instead.

Vaccines that will be available broadly.

Don't Say

Indicate that Black people were not included in clinical trials.

Covid or COVID

"The COVID-19 vaccine" or refer to a singular vaccine since multiple vaccines have been authorized by the FDA.

Specific manufacturers when discussing vaccines (unless explaining the difference between the two current vaccines).

MESSAGING TIPS

LANGUAGE TIPS: DO'S & DONT'S

Do Say	Don't Say
Some people who receive the COVID-19 vaccines may experience some discomfort and mild side effects. This is normal and means the vaccines are working to create an immune response.	The COVID-19 vaccines don't have any side effects.
COVID-19 vaccines or immunization against COVID-19	COVID-19 injection or COVID-19 shot
The recommended vaccines are safe and effective	A vaccine developed quickly
Authorized by FDA based on clinical testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved by the FDA • Operation Warp Speed • Emergency Use Authorization
Get the latest information	There are things we still don't know
Keep your family/those most vulnerable safe	Keep OUR community safe
Public health	Government
Medical experts and doctors	Scientists
People who have questions	Anti-Vaxxers
Everyone should continue to use all available tools to help stop the pandemic not just the COVID-19 vaccines. Other tools, like mask-wearing and social distancing will continue to be important.	Present vaccines as the only tool to ending the pandemic, i.e. "vaccines are the key".

MESSAGING TIPS

LANGUAGE TIPS: DO'S & DONT'S

Do Say

Start a conversation with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider

Don't Say

Use language that implies your organization's role is to help someone decide whether to get vaccinated (i.e. "we can figure this out together")

For more resources to make informed decisions about COVID-19 visit VaccineToolkitBlackCommunity.org