American Diabetes Association®

My Path to Protection: ADA Vaccine Discussions

A Practical Discussion Tool for People with Diabetes

Content created by the ADA in collaboration with Healthy Interactions.

My Path to Protection with Vaccines: ADA Vaccine Discussions

A facilitator guide and patient-facing visual to support vaccine discussions for people with diabetes. This tool has been designed for group sessions. For additional patient interaction resources, please refer to the additional resources in the Vaccination Toolkit. Purpose: Equip diabetes educators to lead short, empathetic, evidence-based discussions that increase patients' understanding, confidence, and action on **American Diabetes Association® (ADA)**-recommended vaccines.

Who this is for: Diabetes educators, diabetes care teams, pharmacists, and other providers who deliver education (group setting).

Learning objectives (20–60-minute session):

- Understand the top five reasons people with diabetes should get vaccinated.
- Be able to explain, simply, how vaccines support diabetes self-management (e.g., blood glucose, sick day risk, hospital avoidance).
- Raise vaccine confidence (practical target: move the patient's confidence rating at least +1 on a 1–10 scale).
- Create a specific, achievable next step (e.g., ask a provider, schedule a vaccine, check pharmacy availability).

How to use this tool:

1. Get started (approximately 10 min): Establish rapport and show the visual. Ask, "What stands out?" and record the patient's baseline confidence (1–10). Use the opening script in the facilitator guide.

2. Explore modules (approximately 5 min each): Always complete How Your Immune System Works and pick one to six topics that are important to the patient. Connect vaccination to diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) topics. Use labeled compass icons on the visual to guide modular discussion. You can use this guide in one full session (about an hour) or break it into shorter parts. The topics don't have to be done in order—pick the ones you want to use.

3. Plan next steps (approximately 5 min): Read the "My Vaccination Plan" box with the patient, document one concrete action, re-rate vaccine confidence, and hand the patient the My Path to Protection: Vaccines take-home tool with local resources.

Facilitator essentials (short prompts and tips):

- Read the entire guide several times to learn the language and flow of the material and have the picture on hand to reference.
- As you talk about different parts of the map, point them out to ensure the patient sees the correct part of the picture.
- Opening line suggestion: "Thanks for joining me. This picture will guide a short discussion about vaccines and diabetes. You're in charge of what you want to know."
- Use open, probing questions: "What made that word come to mind?" or "What would move you one point closer to a 10?"
- Address common concerns briefly with facts (see Understanding Facts About Vaccines on page 19). Example: Vaccines don't cause diabetes, but small, temporary blood glucose changes may occur and are far less risky than infection.
- If the patient asks about mRNA, use the optional mRNA script (visual metaphor and guide on page 18).

Materials to bring to a session:

- One printed My Path to Protection: Vaccines visual
- My Path to Protection: Vaccines take-home tool
- A pen to record the patient's confidence and plan
- Optional: Local vaccine access information (e.g., clinic, pharmacy, scheduling links)
- Various ADA infographics related to vaccinations, as needed

Expected outcomes and evaluation:

- Document baseline and end confidence scores. Aim for at least +1 increase.
- Track actions (e.g., scheduled vaccine, asked provider) and collect survey feedback.

Facilitator reminders:

- **Do:** Listen first, use the visual as a discussion guide, keep language simple, validate concerns, follow up with specific resources or a provider.
- **Don't:** Lecture or overwhelm with clinical details.

Additional resources:

1. Additional vaccination resources (infographics and handouts) are available at **professional.diabetes.org/vaccinations**.
2. Additional diabetes infographics are available at **professional.diabetes.org/infographics**.
3. Additional diabetes education resources are available at **professional.diabetes.org/clinical-support/patient-education-library**.

My Path to Protection: Vaccines Visual Description

Top 5 Reasons I Should Get Vaccinated (in the top left cliff wall)

1. Prevent dangerous infections:
- When you have diabetes, you are more likely to be hospitalized or worse from flu-related complications.[1]
- Diabetes lowers immunity → Vaccines (e.g., flu, pneumonia, COVID-19) prevent illnesses that could quickly become dangerous.
- Diabetes can impair your immune system, making infections more likely to occur and recovery harder.

2. Help manage blood glucose:
- Infections can raise blood glucose (blood sugar) dramatically and make it harder for you to manage them. Vaccines can reduce the risk of illness and related fluctuations in blood glucose levels during sick days.
- Illness can lead to dangerous conditions, like diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) or severe hypoglycemia → Vaccination lowers the chance that you will get an infection that will lead to an emergency or be admitted to a hospital.

3. Reduce hospital visits and costs:
- Preventing illness caused by germs, such as viruses, helps keep your life on track.
- Getting your vaccines will help keep you out of the hospital and save you money by avoiding costly medical bills. You'll also miss less work, which will help your productivity.

4. Protect loved ones:
- Community immunity helps protect family and friends, especially children and older adults.[2]

5. Build lasting immunity:
- Vaccines give your immune system a head start so your body is ready to fight infections before you're exposed to germs that may make you sick.

Physical activity: The top shows a person climbing down the cliff. Regular physical activity helps keep your whole body healthy—including your mind—and can help how your body responds to vaccines and illness.

Blood glucose monitoring: The top middle shows a person checking their blood glucose with a fingerstick and another using a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) phone app. Keeping your blood glucose in a healthy range helps keep you and your immune system healthy.

My vaccination plan: The top right shows a list of actions the patient may take in the next week. Having a goal gives you direction, motivates you to take action, and helps you plan and track your progress.

Vaccine confidence: The bottom left shows a person jumping on the air balloon to bounce a person the patient up in the air. This outlines vaccine confidence on a 1–10 scale, as detailed in the following section in this facilitator guide. The people waiting in the water represent the individual's support system, providing encouragement for the decision to receive vaccination.

How your immune system works: The navigation sign at the bottom center (left) shows health and disease as a terrain to be understood, not feared. Just as hikers study maps to understand what lies ahead, understanding how your body and immune system work will help you understand how immunizations help keep you healthy in the future.

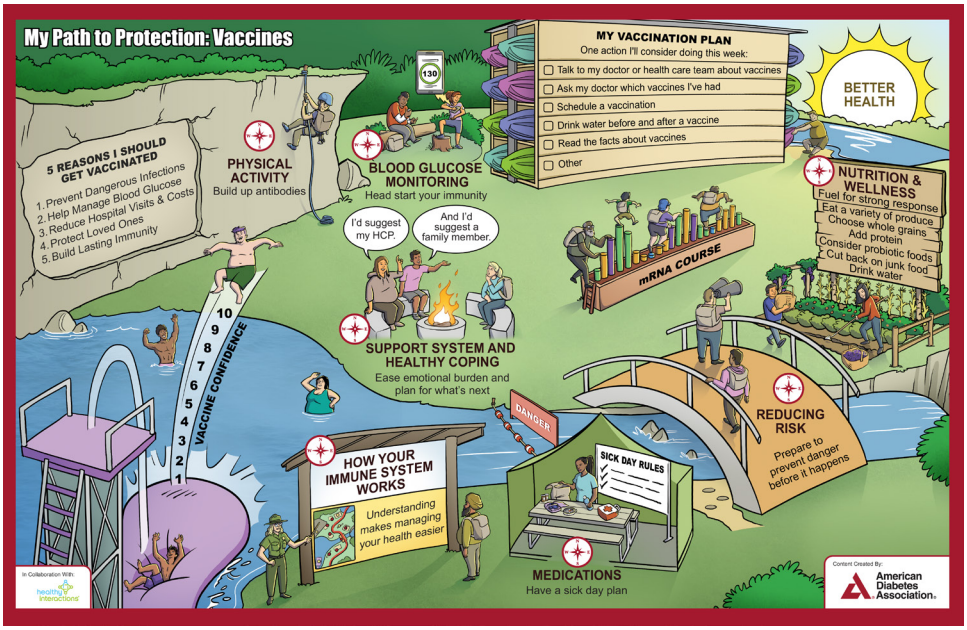
Medications: The bottom center (right) of the visual depicts an individual preparing a bag with prescribed medications. Just as hikers pack their essential gear when hiking, it is important to take your medications for managing your diabetes.

Reducing risk: The bridge shows a person looking ahead for danger and another holding a rail to ensure safety. You can see a few dangers in the water below (waterfall at the end of the river, rocks, high water current). Just as taking precautions helps you avoid hazards on a journey, vaccination is a proactive step to reduce your risk of complications (e.g., acute complications such as DKA, severe hyperglycemia or hypoglycemia, and chronic complications involving kidneys, eyes, nerves, feet, teeth, and heart disease).

Nutrition and Wellness: On the far right is a garden. Think of the vibrant community garden as your "supply station." Just as gathering essential gear before a hike prepares you for the journey, selecting nourishing foods gives your body and immune system the energy and resources needed for the path ahead.

Support system and healthy coping: The center left of the visual depicts a circle of people exchanging ideas—some that may have diabetes, and friend(s) and/or family member(s) of the person with diabetes that make up their support system. A support system is discussed later in this guide.

mRNA: The center right depicts individuals of various ages moving from one pole to another. The purpose is to discuss mRNA vaccines, how they work, and address questions related to this technology. If participants want to talk about it, there is an optional training section on page 18.



Getting Started: The First Step on the Path (Approx. 10 Minutes)

Facilitator goal: Create a safe space, understand the patient's starting point, and set a positive frame for the discussion.

Part 1. The Starting Point: Understanding Your Views on Vaccination (10 min.)
1. Hi, {Name}! Thanks for taking time to talk with me. Today we'll focus on your biggest questions about vaccines. To start, we will be using the Story Poster in front of you. (Continue reading)

2. Take a look at this picture. What stands out to you? (Stop and discuss.)

3. This picture will guide us through the discussion. We'll move through your feelings, facts about vaccines, and how vaccination fits into life with diabetes. My job is to listen, share helpful information, and help you find answers that make sense to you. You decide what is right for your health. (Continue reading)

4. By the end, you'll be able to:
- Understand the top five reasons people with diabetes choose to get vaccinated.
- Understand the facts behind vaccines.
- Recognize the benefits of vaccination for your life.
- Plan your next step and know where to get solid information. (Continue reading)

5. Look at the water trampoline labeled "Vaccine Confidence" at the bottom left. When you hear the words "vaccines" and "diabetes," what word or image comes to mind? (Stop and discuss.)

6. What made that word come to mind? An experience you had? Something you were told? Something you read? (Stop and discuss.)

7. On a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means “not at all confident” and 10 means “extremely confident,” how confident are you about getting recommended vaccines? (Stop and discuss.)

Note: Write their number down to compare to the end of the discussion.

8. What makes you feel that way? (Stop and discuss.)

9. What would help you move closer to a 10? (Stop and discuss.)

10. Let’s keep that in mind as we look at a few facts people often wonder about. (Continue reading)

Outcome: Establishing baseline understanding allows for tailored, empathetic communication that fosters trust and increases the likelihood of a positive health behavior change. This initial step is crucial for addressing hesitancy effectively. You’ll ask how they’re feeling at the start and again at the end of the session. The number should be higher by the end.

Part 2. Exploring the Path: Self-Management Modules (Approx. 5 Minutes Each)

Facilitator goal: To demonstrate how vaccination is an integral component of the nine diabetes self-management education and support (DSMES) curriculum content areas and can be interwoven into whatever topic you are discussing, reinforce its importance in holistic diabetes care. In this section, we connect the benefits of vaccination to specific areas of diabetes self-management in a modular way. At the same time, we want to present facts related to vaccinations that address any fears or concerns participants may have. Choose the modules most relevant to the person with diabetes or flow through them for a comprehensive session. Wherever you finish in Part 2, move on to Part 3 for your wrap-up—and don’t forget to ask the individual to fill out the brief survey. Their feedback helps us keep improving.

1. Let's explore how vaccination isn't just a separate topic but fits right into the everyday things you already do to manage your diabetes. (Continue reading)

2. You may be familiar with the key areas of diabetes self-management—like healthy eating, being active, blood glucose monitoring, and so on. These things help you manage blood glucose, also called blood sugar. In this section, we'll connect vaccination to each of these areas. On the picture, these are shown next to the compass symbol. Please read each of these topics aloud. (Stop and do.)

3. We want to see how being vaccinated can support your efforts in all parts of your diabetes care, helping you to stay on track and protect your overall health. We’ll go through these key areas and discuss how vaccination plays a supportive role. (Continue reading)

How Your Immune System Works

There has been much discussion and disagreement about vaccines, and in this session, I will help you understand the facts about vaccines as we go. Some people ask, "Can vaccines cause diabetes or worsen blood glucose levels?" What are your thoughts on that before we look at the information here? (Stop and discuss.)

- The answer is no. Vaccines do not cause your blood glucose levels to rise or cause diabetes. Some people may notice a short-term change in blood glucose levels due to the body's reaction to the vaccination, but it's typically mild and temporary. (Continue reading)

Sometimes people ask, "Can getting too many vaccines overwhelm the immune system and cause me to get sicker?" How do you think your body handles the thousands of germs it meets every day compared to the small number that come from a vaccine? (Stop and discuss.)

- The answer is no. Your immune system is amazing and handles thousands of germs every day. The number of germs in recommended vaccines is tiny in comparison to what you're typically exposed to and poses no risk of overwhelming your system. (Continue reading)

1. Look at the trail map at the bottom of the picture. Just as hikers study maps to understand what lies ahead, understanding how your body and immune system work will help you understand how immunizations help keep you healthy in the future— what's uphill, where it's rough, and what could throw you off course. (Continue reading)

2. Think of your body as a hiking trail on a map. This full picture shows high peaks, low valleys, steep slopes, and safe paths. The questions we will discuss together will guide you through your diabetes "terrain" and see where vaccines fit in. (Continue reading)

3. **Finding the peaks:** Look at these peaks. What might they represent in your body? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: High blood glucose levels when you get sick.

4. What could cause a steep peak in our picture? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Infection, stress, and skipped medications.

5. **Exploring the valleys:** See these deep valleys? How do you feel when your body is here? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Tired, slow to heal, and higher chance of getting sick.

6. Why do you think valleys make it harder to fight illness? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Immune system is weaker, and cells are under stress.

7. **Walking the trail:** Our trail shows daily steps—food, movement, and medications. How do these help you avoid big peaks or deep valleys? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Healthy food and exercise help keep blood glucose steady and boost defenses.

8. **Spotting the bridge:** The bridge is like a vaccine. Where would you place it in the picture? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Between peaks and valleys to keep you on the trail.

9. How does having this bridge help you on your hike? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: It stops big swings, keeps you from sinking into a valley, and helps you stay healthy.

10. Diabetes happens when your body's system for processing food for energy is not working properly, and blood glucose levels rise higher than normal. High blood glucose happens when your body cannot keep your blood glucose levels within target ranges. High blood glucose levels weaken your immune system and raise your risk for infection.

So, if your blood glucose levels are often higher than your target range, you will have a weaker response to infections, and it will take longer to recover. That is why vaccines are so important—not just to avoid illness, but to help protect your health.

Without vaccines, infections like the flu or pneumonia can lead to dangerous conditions, such as diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA). Getting sick can make your blood glucose rise. People with diabetes may also face worse complications from infections like COVID-19.

Vaccines help give your body a head start on fighting germs by teaching it to fight infections before they start. Avoiding illness helps keep your blood glucose more balanced, and staying healthy saves you time, money, and stress from medical visits and health emergencies.

The American Diabetes Association® (ADA) recommends vaccines as part of your diabetes treatment plan. Keeping up to date with ADA-recommended vaccinations is one of the best ways to stay healthy and on track. (Continue reading)

Reference: **diabetes.org/vaccinations**[4]

Reminder: No matter how many sections you cover in Part 2, always finish after Part 3 with your wrap-up—and do not forget to ask the patient to fill out the brief survey. Their feedback helps us keep improving.

Note: If the patient asks about mRNA, use the questions on page 18 to walk them through that learning.

Nutrition and Wellness

Some people ask, “Can healthy food choices and including dietary supplements protect you from viruses?”

- The answer is no. While good nutrition is powerful, it cannot prevent all contagious diseases on its own. A vaccine gives your immune system specific instructions to fight off the germs it might not be able to handle alone. (Continue reading)

1. Imagine we’re at a campsite and there is a sign that lists what we need for our trip. Just like you pack your backpack with the right gear, you pack your body with the right foods to stay strong on your adventure—and to help vaccines work their best. (Continue reading)

2. Look at the Nutrition and Wellness scene on the right side of the picture. You will see the garden sign which lists several tips. To start, let’s focus on the first tip. Most experts would recommend having a healthy eating plan with a colorful variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Before getting ready for a hike, you pick a variety of gear. How is choosing these foods for healthy immunity like packing different types of gear? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Each color has specific vitamins and minerals—like tools that help your body in different ways. For example, orange and red fruits and vegetables, such as carrots and bell peppers, are rich in vitamin C and beta-carotene, which help your body produce protective immune cells. Dark leafy greens like spinach provide vitamin E and folate, important for building and repairing immune defenses. And mushrooms and cabbage offer zinc and selenium, minerals that help your “soldiers” (antibodies) respond faster to invaders. Packing a rainbow of produce means you’re ready with the best gear to keep your immune system in top shape.

3. We choose whole grains like whole grain oats or brown rice. What would happen if you packed only candy bars? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Candy causes a quick rise in blood glucose, instead of a steady slow release of glucose in the blood. It is an example of what is widely known as an “empty calorie food.” These types of foods provide calories, sugar, and fat, while whole grains provide vitamins, minerals, or fiber.)

4. Why might you pack jerky, nuts, or cheese on the trail? How does protein help your body? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Protein builds your “soldiers” (antibodies) that fight off germs.

5.What about yogurt or kefir? Why bring probiotic foods to your campsite? (Stop and discuss.)
Note: The discussion may include reading food labels and portion sizes for recommended foods.

Guide them: They are like friendly helpers in your gut that keep you feeling well and your gut healthy (e.g., increased feeling of fullness, regular bowel movements vs. loose stools, etc.) Other examples of probiotics include pickles, sauerkraut, buttermilk, kimchi, tempeh.)

6. You would not carry extra weight you don't need on a hike. Why cut back on empty calorie "junk" foods like chips and soda? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Empty calorie foods slow you down and weaken your defenses, just like heavy gear tires you out.

7. How important is water on a trail? What happens if you run low? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Water keeps you going, helps you digest food, and supports your vaccine's "bridge" by flushing nutrients around.

8. How will packing these foods help you stay energized and healthy—just like good camping gear? (Stop and discuss.)

9. Which of these six tips will you add to your next meal plan, especially before your next vaccine? You may choose more than one. (Stop and discuss.)

10. You are all set for both your camping trip and your health journey. Remember: Just as you would not hit the trail without the right gear, don't face illness or vaccines without the right foods and water. (Continue reading)

Note: At the end of the session, remind participants that it is essential to combine a variety of non-starchy vegetables, lean protein, and quality carbohydrates like starchy vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and milk or yogurt.

Reminder: No matter how many sections you cover in Part 2, always finish after Part 3 with your wrap-up—and do not forget to ask the patient to fill out the brief survey. Their feedback helps us keep improving.

Physical Activity

1. Look at the person climbing down the cliff. Climbing takes effort, balance, and strength—just like the results you want from physical activity. Let us explore how being active helps you stay healthy. (Continue reading)

2. Some say, "Staying active means I don't need vaccines because it keeps me healthy." What do you think? (Stop and discuss.)

The fact is that physical activity is great for your immune system, but it cannot help your body decrease your risk of getting sick like vaccines do. While studies do show people who stay active in the weeks before receiving a vaccine can make more antibodies[3], vaccines boost your body's immunity against specific germs that it cannot fight off alone.[5] (Continue reading)

3. We all know being active is important. What benefits have you noticed when you walk, bike, dance, or climb? (Stop and discuss.)

Listen and connect: If they say, "I feel happier," point out how that helps mental health. If they say, "I sleep better," link to overall wellbeing.

4.How will you fit 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week into your week? How do you think that will help when you get your next vaccine? (Stop and discuss.)

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Medications

1. The medication you take for managing your diabetes is like your essential gear when hiking. You do not wait until you are lost to use a compass, you use it along the way to know where you are headed. Medications work with you throughout your day to help you stay healthy. Some help you manage your blood glucose and others treat symptoms before they worsen. (Continue reading)

2. We sometimes hear this, so I would like to ask what you think. Are vaccines just a way for drug companies to make money? (Stop and discuss.)

- The answer is no. While companies do make money, vaccines save you money by protecting your health and helping you avoid the much higher costs—both financial and personal—of getting sick or seriously ill. (Continue reading)

3. Have you ever wondered "Can I manage my blood glucose well enough so I will not get sick and do not need to take vaccines? (Stop and discuss.)

- The answer is no. While keeping your blood glucose levels in your target range helps lower your risk of illness, you may still get sick, but the severity is likely to be less. (Continue reading)

4. Why do you take your diabetes medicines every day? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: To keep blood glucose in a safe range.

5. What happens to your blood glucose level when you miss a dose or your dose is not right?" (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: It can go too high and cause problems.

6. Let us say you have the flu. Even if you take your medications as prescribed, what might happen to your blood glucose level? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: It can go higher and become harder to manage.

7. How could a huge rise in blood glucose when you are sick make you feel or complicate your care? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: More trips to the doctor or hospital and feeling extremely sick.

Refer to the ADA's Sick Day Guide for People with Diabetes infographic at **diabetes.org/about-diabetes/vaccinations**.

8. We have talked about medications. Now, how could vaccines help you avoid those big blood glucose variations when you are sick? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: By preventing the illness, blood glucose stays steadier.

9. If medications keep your blood glucose in your target range and vaccines help you to not get sick, how do the two work together? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Medications help manage blood glucose, which helps your immune system. Vaccines protect you from germs that put extra stress on your body and affect blood glucose.

10. Who can help you decide which vaccines you need each year? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Health care professionals like doctors or pharmacists.

11. What would you ask them about your vaccines? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Which vaccines are due, safety questions, and timing with medicines.

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Blood Glucose Monitoring

1. Look at the scene of the two people checking their blood glucose levels. Monitoring is like checking your compass on a hike—it tells you where you are (and with CGM, where you may be headed), so you can reach your target. (Continue reading)

2. People often ask, "If people who are vaccinated still get sick, does that mean the vaccine didn't work?" It's a great question. The fact is, no vaccine is 100% effective, but it significantly reduces your chances of getting infected and, most importantly, will help keep you from getting seriously ill, needing to be admitted to a hospital, or worse. (Continue reading)

3. From your experience, how does being sick affect your blood glucose levels and what you expect your monitoring results to be? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Infections often cause significant changes in blood glucose levels, making them harder to predict and manage.

4. When you are sick, your blood glucose levels can be unpredictable, like a defective compass that spins uncontrollably. What feelings do you have when you have trouble managing your blood glucose? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Stressful, frustrating, unpredictable, and overwhelmed.

5. We know a vaccine is not a perfect shield, but it acts like a raincoat in a storm. It keeps you from getting soaked. How hard do you think managing your blood glucose would be if you were not feeling well versus being extremely sick? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: My numbers would not rise as high, they'd be more stable and easier to manage, and it wouldn't be as disruptive.

6. So, how does staying up to date on vaccines make managing your blood glucose less stressful and more effective? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: By preventing serious illnesses, it prevents the big, unpredictable variations in my blood glucose levels, making my daily management easier and more successful.

Reminder: No matter how many sections you cover in Part 2, always finish after Part 3 with your wrap-up—and do not forget to ask the patient to fill out the brief survey. Their feedback helps us keep improving.

Reducing Risks

1. Notice the two people standing on the sturdy bridge. Below them is a rocky, difficult path near the water. Managing diabetes involves making smart choices to avoid danger, much like choosing to take a safe bridge instead of a dangerous path. (Continue reading)

2. A concern we sometimes hear is, "Are vaccines tested thoroughly?" The answer is yes. To be approved, vaccines go through some of the most rigorous and extensive safety testing of any medical product, and they continue to be monitored for safety even after they are approved. (Continue reading)

3. The person on the bridge is looking ahead with binoculars. What do you think they are looking for? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Dangers, risks, and planning the safest route ahead.

4. How is getting vaccinated like choosing to take that sturdy bridge instead of the dangerous path below? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: It is a safer, smarter choice. It helps you avoid the known dangers of getting seriously ill, like high blood glucose, hospitalization, or other problems.

5. A goal of managing diabetes is to prevent complications. In your view, how does avoiding an illness like pneumonia or the "flu" fit into that goal? (Stop and discuss.)

6. Any illness puts extra stress on your body and can make managing blood glucose harder. Choosing the bridge, like on the map, helps you avoid risks. How does vaccination help protect you from both short-term dangerous conditions, like DKA, and long-term health problems? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: It prevents illness that could trigger an emergency and it keeps my body from the extra stress that can cause damage over time.

Reminder: No matter how many sections you cover in Part 2, always finish after Part 3 with your wrap-up—and do not forget to ask the patient to fill out the brief survey. Their feedback helps us keep improving.

Support System and Healthy Coping

1. Look at the three people interacting in this scene—they represent a support team consisting of a person with diabetes, a friend, and a family member. You don't have to navigate a challenging journey alone because you have people to help you along the way. (Continue reading)

2. How is your support team—your family, friends, and/or health care professionals—like a team on a long hike? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: They help carry the burden, offer encouragement, help navigate, and keep you safe.

3. Living with diabetes isn't just about physical health, it's emotional, too, and can be stressful. How do you cope with the daily demands of managing it all? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: Gently steer the patient toward naming emotions, identifying what already works, and spotting gaps.

4. Getting sick adds another layer of stress and complexity, like a sudden storm on your hike. How can having a strong team help you when things get tough? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: They can help me with my care, offer emotional support, and reduce my stress.

5. A vaccination is another tool your diabetes support team can use to help protect your health. How does getting vaccinated help protect not just you, but also your “team,” including your family and friends? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: It creates "community immunity," shielding people I care about, especially children or older adults.

6. When you feel protected from serious illness, how does that lighten your emotional load—including what we call “diabetes distress”—for both you and your support system? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: We all have more peace of mind. We worry less about emergencies or hospital visits.

7. Who is on your support team and how could you involve them as you consider your next step with vaccination? (Stop and discuss.)

Reminder: No matter how many sections you cover in Part 2, always finish after Part 3 with your wrap-up—and don’t forget to ask the patient to fill out the brief survey. Their feedback helps us keep improving.

Part 3. Planning Your Next Step (Approx. 5 Minutes)

Facilitator goal: To help the patient identify a concrete, personal, and achievable next step.

1. We have covered a lot on our journey today. We have talked about your feelings, how vaccines affect your diabetes management, and looked at some facts about vaccines. (Continue reading)

2. Look at the top right of the picture where the person is about to pull a kayak out. You can see My Vaccination Plan. Please read the list aloud. (Stop and do.)

3. Thinking about our discussion, what feels like one possible next step for you? (Stop and discuss.)

4. It does not have to be a big decision. It could be looking up more information, thinking about a question you would like to ask your doctor, or scheduling a discussion with a pharmacist. (Continue reading)

5. A personal health plan is your trail map. It sets the direction, the pace, and the backup plan if things go off course. It's tailored to you and increases your chances of success. (Continue reading)

(Stop and do.) Listen and help them articulate a clear, simple action. Write it down in the space on their
take-home sheet.

6. That sounds like a great plan. Let us go back and look at the Vaccination Confidence meter at the bottom left of the map. What is your level of vaccine confidence now? (Stop and discuss.)

Note: If the number has not gone up, ask what would help to raise the number by at least one.

7. Thank you again for being so open today. Your health is a journey and you are in the driver's seat.

Note: That wraps up Part 3. Please ask the patient to complete the short survey—your feedback helps us keep improving.

mRNA Vaccines

Note: This section is not part of the training unless the patient wants to know about it. This section can be used to help them understand this topic.

1. People often ask, "Can the messenger RNA (mRNA) molecule in the vaccine change my DNA or make permanent changes in my body?"

- The answer is no. mRNA is like a temporary instruction sheet. It tells your cells how to build one harmless piece of the virus, then it breaks down and disappears. It never touches your DNA. (Continue reading)

2. Look at the playground scene in the center of the picture. Each pole of a different height stands for a bit of mRNA. People of all ages—kids, teens, and adults—jump from pole to pole. What do you notice about how they move and how long they stay on each pole? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: They hop on, use it briefly, then jump off. No one stays long, and they do not carry the pole away.

3. How is jumping on a pole like using the mRNA instructions? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: The mRNA poles are just steps—short-lived instructions your body uses once. After your cells "jump" into action and build the spike protein piece, the mRNA instructions break down, just like the poles stay put and are not changed by the jumpers. Your DNA—the control room in your cells—never interacts with those poles.

4. What happens to those poles after everyone jumps off? (Stop and discuss.)

Guide them: They stay there and aren't carried off—they do not change the person. Everyone just hops and moves on.

Note: Participants see that mRNA vaccines give a quick, safe set of instructions and then vanish—without altering their genetic material.

Understanding Facts About Vaccines

Question: Can vaccines cause diabetes or worsen blood glucose levels?
Answer: No. Vaccines do not induce diabetes and any brief effects on glucose are minor compared to the serious complications of infection.

Question: Can nutrition alone, especially taking nutritional supplements, protect me from viruses?
Answer: No. While good nutrition is powerful, it cannot prevent all contagious diseases on its own. A vaccine gives your immune system specific instructions to fight off the germs it might not be able to manage alone.

Question: If I walk 30 minutes every day, is vaccination optional?
Answer: No. Exercise will benefit the immune system, but it is not enough to prevent disease. Vaccines boost the body's immunity against diseases it cannot fight off alone. Every year, 10–20% of the U.S. population gets the "flu", and that includes perfectly healthy individuals.

Question: Staying active keeps me healthy, so do I still need vaccines?
Answer: Yes. Physical activity is great for your immune system. Studies show people who stay active in the weeks before receiving a vaccine can make more antibodies.
While vaccines boost your body's immunity against germs, it cannot fight them off alone. In summary, vaccinations help decrease your risk of getting sick.

Question: Can I manage my glucose well enough so I will not get sick and don't need to take vaccines?
Answer: No. While keeping your blood glucose levels in your target range helps lower your risk for illness, you may still get sick, but the severity is likely to be less.

Question: Are vaccines just a way for drug companies to make money?
Answer: No. While companies do make money, vaccines save you money by protecting your health and helping you avoid the much higher costs—both financial and personal—of getting sick or seriously ill.

Question: If people who are vaccinated still get sick, does that mean the vaccine didn't work?
Answer: No. While no vaccine is 100% effective, it significantly reduces your chances of getting infected and, most importantly, will help keep you from getting seriously ill, needing to be admitted to a hospital, or worse.

Question: Are vaccines tested thoroughly?
Answer: Yes. To be approved, vaccines go through some of the most rigorous and extensive safety testing of any medical product, and they continue to be monitored for safety even after they are approved.

Question: Can getting too many vaccines overwhelm my immune system and cause me to get sicker?
Answer: No. Your immune system is amazing and manages thousands of germs every day. The number of germs in recommended vaccines is tiny in comparison to what you are typically exposed to and poses no risk of overwhelming your system.

Question: Can respiratory illnesses make it hard to breathe and cause symptoms like cough, fever, sore throat, congestion, and fatigue?

Answer: Yes. Respiratory illnesses, such as the flu, COVID-19, RSV, and the common cold, often share similar symptoms such as cough, fever, sore throat, congestion, and fatigue, and can make breathing difficult. These may worsen other health problems. If you or your family members have a long-term condition like diabetes, asthma, heart disease, or kidney disease, getting sick with a virus can make those conditions harder to manage, but there are ways to help prevent and treat these illnesses, including vaccines and medicines.

Question: Can some people get sicker than others from respiratory illnesses?

Answer: Yes. Adults 65 years and older, children younger than 2 years, and people with health problems like diabetes, heart or lung disease, or weak immune systems can get more seriously ill.

Question: Can I get a seasonal vaccine at any time of the year?

Answer: No, seasonal vaccines are vaccines you get at certain times of the year to protect you from illnesses that are more common in the fall and winter. These vaccines help your body get ready to fight off these germs before you are most likely to come in contact with them. Examples of seasonal vaccines include:

- Flu vaccine: It is recommended to get this vaccine once a year, usually in early fall, so you're protected before flu season starts. If not vaccinated in the fall, you can still get the flu vaccine during the flu season which usually continues through the spring.
- COVID-19 vaccine: It is recommended based on shared clinical decision-making, with an emphasis on the benefit being greater in people at increased risk for severe COVD-19 infection (such as people with diabetes, kidney disease, etc.)
- RSV vaccine: You currently only need one dose of the RSV vaccine. It is recommended for older adults and certain high-risk groups, including people with diabetes who are over 50 years old.
- Pneumococcal vaccines: While not strictly seasonal, they are very important. They help protect you from serious infections that can happen after you get sick with a virus like the flu or RSV. You can get the pneumococcal vaccine any time throughout the year.

Question: Are seasonal vaccines especially important for people with diabetes?

Answer: Yes. If you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes, getting seasonal vaccines like the flu, COVID-19, and RSV can help protect you from getting very sick. Vaccines lower your risk of serious illness.

Question: Should people with diabetes get their seasonal vaccines in early fall?

Answer: Yes. It's best to get your vaccines in early fall so you are protected when viruses like the flu start spreading (typically the beginning of October).

References
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Flu and People with Diabetes. **https://cdc.gov/flu/highrisk/diabetes.html**. Published n.d. Accessed July 28, 2025.
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4. American Diabetes Association. Vaccinations. **https://diabetes.org/about-diabetes/vaccinations**. Published n.d. Accessed October 10, 2025.
5. World Health Organization. How do Vaccines Work. **https://who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/how-do-vaccines-work**. Published n.d. Accessed October 2, 2025.
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Content created by the ADA in collaboration with Healthy Interactions.

For the Patient

Please have patients complete the following survey via the QR code on the My Path to Protection: Vaccines Key Reminders handout or on **diabetes.org/dsmesvaccine**.

Vaccination Education Impact Survey

Thank you for participating in today's education session.
The American Diabetes Association® (ADA) would like to understand how the vaccination information shared may have influenced your **knowledge, confidence,** and **readiness** to **get vaccinated**. Your honest feedback is important and will help us improve how we support people with diabetes. This survey should take no more than **5–7 minutes** to complete.

Your responses will remain confidential and will only be reported in aggregate.
By proceeding, you are consenting to allow the ADA to use your deidentified responses in reports, presentations, abstracts, or publications.

Important Terms:
For the purpose of this survey, **"seasonal vaccines"** refer to vaccines commonly recommended on an annual or seasonal basis, including:

- Influenza (Flu) vaccine
- COVID-19 vaccine
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccine

Please note: You do not need to have received all of these vaccines to complete the survey. Your responses are valuable regardless of your vaccination status and will help us better understand overall awareness, confidence, and readiness related to seasonal vaccinations.

In the past 12 months, have you received any of the following seasonal vaccines?

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Not Applicable
Influenza	○	○	○	○
COVID-19	○	○	○	○
RSV (if eligible)	○	○	○	○

How helpful was the vaccination information provided during the session?

- ○ Not at all helpful
- ○ Slightly helpful
- ○ Moderately helpful
- ○ Very helpful
- ○ Extremely helpful

Before receiving the vaccination information, how **knowledgeable were you** about the vaccines recommended for people with diabetes?

- ○ Not at all knowledgeable
- ○ Somewhat knowledgeable
- ○ Moderately knowledgeable
- ○ Very knowledgeable
- ○ Extremely knowledgeable

After receiving the vaccination information, how **knowledgeable are you** about the vaccines recommended for people with diabetes?

- ○ Not at all knowledgeable
- ○ Somewhat knowledgeable
- ○ Moderately knowledgeable
- ○ Very knowledgeable
- ○ Extremely knowledgeable

How **confident** were you before the session in taking steps to stay up to date on each the following seasonal vaccines?

	Not at all	Somewhat	Moderately	Very	Extremely	Not Applicable
Influenza	○	○	○	○	○	○
COVID-19	○	○	○	○	○	○
RSV (if eligible)	○	○	○	○	○	○

After receiving the vaccination information, how **confident are you** about staying up to date on the following seasonal vaccines?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Likely	Very Likely
Influenza	○	○	○	○	○
COVID-19	○	○	○	○	○
RSV (if eligible)	○	○	○	○	○

After receiving the vaccine information, **how likely are you to get the recommended seasonal vaccines** in the next 30-90 days?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Likely	Very Likely
Influenza	○	○	○	○	○
COVID-19	○	○	○	○	○
RSV (if eligible)	○	○	○	○	○

What are the main reasons you are unsure or unlikely to get the COVID-19 vaccine in the next 30-90 days *(select top three reasons)*

- ☐ I am concerned about side effects
- ☐ I don't think I need the vaccine
- ☐ I am unsure if the vaccine is effective
- ☐ I don't trust the vaccine
- ☐ I prefer to wait and see
- ☐ I don't think COVID is still a risk
- ☐ I don't have enough information
- ☐ I had a previous reaction to vaccines
- ☐ It is hard to find a convenient location/time
- ☐ Cost concerns
- ☐ Transportation or access issues
- ☐ I plan to talk to my doctor first
- ☐ Other, please describe _____

Where did you receive this education?
(Please specify organization, Education Recognition Program (ERP) ID, or event name)

_____
_____

What was most meaningful about this session today?

_____
_____
_____

Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the vaccination toolkit?

_____
_____
_____

Notes:

American Diabetes Association®

For additional information, please visit
professional.diabetes.org/vaccinations