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# Communicating with General Audiences

## Impact of COVID-19

- There have been more than 29 million known cases and over 534,000 deaths from COVID-19 in the United States, as of March 18 ([CDC, 2021](#)).
- A [February 2021 survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation](#) found:
  - 55% of American adults reported that they have received at least one dose of the vaccine (18%) or would get the vaccine as soon as they can (37%). The “wait and see” group decreased to 22% and those who reported that will only get the vaccine when it is required for work, school, etc. remained stable at around 7% of the population. The percent of people who said that they will never get vaccinated remained around 15%.
  - 53% of residents in rural regions reported that they have already received the vaccine or would get it as soon as possible, 19% wanted to “wait and see,” 4% would only get vaccinated if it were required of them, and 24% indicated they would not get the vaccine.
  - 55% of people who live in urban regions reported that they have already received the vaccine or would get it as soon as possible, 24% wanted to “wait and see,” 8% would only get vaccinated if it were required of them, and 13% indicated they would not get the vaccine.
- A recent study found that essential workers, most of whom are exposed to the public because their jobs cannot be done from home, are at higher risk for COVID-19 ([Selden & Berdahl, 2020](#)).
- Rural non-metropolitan residents have a higher prevalence of underlying medical conditions that may result in more serious cases of COVID-19 than do residents of large central metro regions ([CDC, July 2020](#)).
- The cumulative COVID-19 death rate in non-metropolitan counties is 14% higher than metropolitan counties (177 per 100,000 population vs. 155 per 100,000 population) ([CDC, March 2021](#)).
- Multiple surveys identify concern about possible side effects and vaccine safety as among the top reasons for waiting to get a vaccine within all populations ([U.S. Census Bureau, February 2021](#)).

## Talking Points

- Getting vaccinated will mean spending more time with loved ones and engaging with your community.
- All the COVID-19 vaccines authorized for use in the U.S. are safe. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines will continue to undergo extensive safety monitoring. CDC recommends getting the vaccine as soon as you are eligible.
- All of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing severe disease and were nearly 100% effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID-19 in clinical trials.
- COVID-19 spreads most commonly between people who are in close contact with one another. To protect yourself and your loved ones, wear a mask over your nose and mouth in public, stay at least 6 feet away (which is about 2 arm lengths) from people who don't live in your household, and avoid crowds.
- COVID-19 vaccines can cause side effects in some people, but serious side effects are extremely rare. Most side effects go away on their own in a few days. The most common side effect is a sore arm at the injection site.
- Safe COVID vaccines were developed quickly through use of a century of vaccine experience; technology that was new to vaccines but had been studied for two decades; a prototype coronavirus vaccine already in development at NIH; and tens of thousands of volunteers for clinical trials that enabled rapid accumulation of data on safety and effectiveness. Simultaneous vaccine production and analysis of testing data also allowed vaccines to be shipped within days of FDA authorization.
- The federal government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people living in the United States.

## Messages/Tone Resonating with General Audiences

- Use credible, science-based information.
- Acknowledge that it's normal for people to have questions about the vaccines and that their questions matter.
- Remind people that vaccines are another tool in the toolkit to protect themselves and loved ones.