

It's worth the shot

A brief intervention for General
Practice and General Practitioners to
encourage COVID-19 vaccination



Tip Sheet – How to use the resources to start the conversation

It’s worth the shot (IWTS) originated as a national community engagement strategy to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in rural and regional Australia through Primary Health Networks. The aim is to support people in their journey towards vaccination.

The IWTS resources include two sets of illustrated cards designed to encourage reflection and invite questions, and conversation. One set of cards focuses on what is standing in the way of a decision to vaccinate while the other invites reflection on the benefits of vaccination to our lives and relationships.

In this Tip Sheet we’ll show you how you can easily use these cards to initiate spontaneous conversations and offer verified information in a relaxed and personal way, supporting people towards a decision to vaccinate.

The best public health outcome from the COVID-19 vaccination program in Australia is high coverage, in a timely way, to realise the benefits for individuals and communities. But some people in community are still reluctant to vaccinate or get boosters. A wide spectrum of reasons are known, including:

- > lack of confidence
- > lack of knowledge and awareness about the importance of vaccination
- > misgivings embedded in cultural contexts
- > apprehension about potential side-effects
- > broader safety concerns
- > complacency

IWTS as a brief intervention

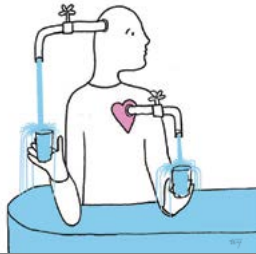
You can use the IWTS cards as a brief intervention for all general practices and pharmacies. These short conversations are a natural way to nudge people along through a shared decision making process and can lead to an acceptance of vaccination.

Two sets of cards help show the benefits of vaccination and the way to come to decisions: DECISION CARDS and BENEFITS CARDS. The front of each card illustrates a key point, supported by further brief information on the reverse of each card.

Decision cards *(available to download here)*

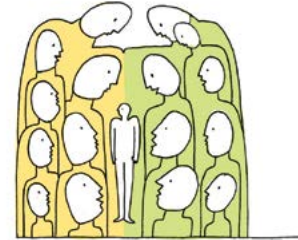
This whole
COVID-19 thing...
It's so draining.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



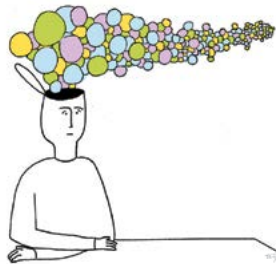
I feel caught in
the middle.
Everyone has strong
opinions, except me.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



I'm confused.
I don't want to make
the wrong decision.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



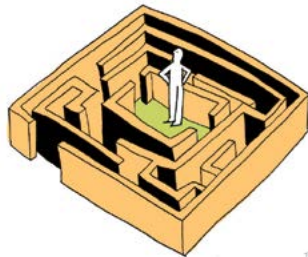
Should I or
shouldn't I?
When it's not just
about me.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



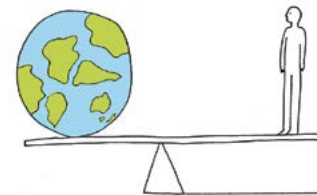
I feel
cornered.
My job's at stake.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



What's the
point?
I'm only one
person anyway.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



What's next
for me?
I'm ready for the
next step.

What's stopping me?
It's worth the shot.



We're staying
one step ahead.
It's our turn
for a boost.

Feeling safe.
It's worth the shot.



Onwards and
upwards.
It's my turn.

Don't miss out.
It's worth the shot.



Open the
door.
It's their turn.

The magic of a child's
world. It's worth the shot.



Benefit cards (available to download here)

Being together... it's worth the shot.

CHF

All over the world and in Australia too, outbreaks of COVID-19 have kept friends and families apart. New technology has been fantastic for keeping us in touch, but hugging a new laptop isn't quite the same as hugging a new baby.

We're important to each other and we worry, especially where health is concerned. Think about people you care about who are high risk – for example they might be pregnant, immuno compromised or have underlying health issues. The benefits to protecting others, including your family, far outweighs the extremely small risks of vaccination.

It'll be much easier to 'keep that lovin' feeling' if we've all done our bit.

CHF Consumers Health Forum of Australia
For further information contact CHF at info@chf.org.au

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Why wait? The best in life is worth the shot.

Freedom... it's worth the shot.

CHF

What are the everyday freedoms you don't want to do without?

The simple joys of catching public transport, running your business, doing the work you love, taking a dance class, cheering at the footie? And how about the freedom to travel safely to new places?

Don't miss out. No-one wants to be caught out or turned away at the gate – to any of life's possibilities.

The more people who help out by being vaccinated, the safer your community is and the more certain the freedoms we can all enjoy. Be ready for when vaccination is required.

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Why wait? The best in life is worth the shot.

Listening to people you can trust... it's worth the shot.

CHF

Decisions around our health are probably the most important we'll ever make. That means we need to get the best advice we can from people we trust – your doctor, your nurse, your community health experts.

Now is not the time to be guided by anonymous health advice on social media. Now is the time to trust the trained professionals who have a history of looking after us.

Trust (as you always have) in the knowledge and skills you can find at your local general practice, pharmacy or through your aged care provider, counsellor or community nurse.

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Why wait? The best in life is worth the shot.

Knowing you can plan something special... it's worth the shot.

CHF

One of the most difficult things for many Australians during the pandemic has been the disappointment of significant moments put on hold or missed altogether. Things like family reunions, Christmas holidays, weddings, funerals, concerts, new jobs, a house move, or studying overseas.

New requirements for proof of vaccination will increasingly make a habit of getting in the way.

Didn't think you'd need the vaccination? Didn't expect to be excluded? It can happen anytime, anywhere. Vaccination will bring you peace of mind – and reduce those outbreaks too.

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Why wait? The best in life is worth the shot.

We can be heroes for each other... it's worth the shot.

CHF

We've all seen the anxiety and loneliness COVID-19 has brought, especially to the most vulnerable. Many people have felt left out, cut off and are still struggling to feel included again.

The more people who are vaccinated, the safer it becomes for all people to confidently get together again. Sharing your experience with people who are still making their decision is a really important contribution.

Just by speaking up and letting people know you've been safely vaccinated, will help your community be safe enough to welcome everyone. It starts with you.

Your mental health is as important as your physical health. Don't let COVID-19 get you down. Being vaccinated is a real relief. If you, or anyone you know, is anxious or depressed call Lifeline 13 11 24 or Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636.

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Why wait? The best in life is worth the shot.

Making a safer world together... it's worth the shot.

CHF

Australia can seem a long way from the rest of the world but managing COVID-19 isn't just about us, it's about the world we share. Every country is trying to look after the health and well being of their humans. They need us to do the same.

If we want to keep our borders free, strengthen the economy, create job opportunities and protect the future for our young people... it's up to us to vaccinate.

We've got a lot of living and loving to do yet.

Still reeling from Australia being cut off from the rest of the world for so long? The sooner we vaccinate, the sooner we can have choices again.

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Why wait? The best in life is worth the shot.

How do I use the cards?

Shared decision-making starts with a conversation to understand what’s important to the person in front of you and their understanding of the risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccination.

Nudging people along

Consider a nudge at every touch point (see *flow chart in Key Strategies: Nudging on page 10*)

- > Every encounter with a person offers an opportunity to provide a nudge
- > When you see a person or speak to them over the phone ask about their COVID-19 vaccination status
- > Ask the person when they present for any consultation about their COVID-19 vaccination status
- > A follow-on consultation may be required to discuss the vaccination in more detail
- > Keep the conversation open for the next visit

Before you start

Check out the 2 sets of cards

Familiarise yourself with their intent and messages

Watch the training video

Have the 2 sets of cards at hand

Step 1:

ASSESS

Set out DECISION cards ([available to download here](#))

(Using all the cards at once may be too overwhelming and too lengthy in a short timeframe. If time is limited signpost them to the website or, if available, give them a set of cards and arrange a follow up appointment.)

- > Who have you got in front of you? Put yourself in their shoes
- > Ask yourself what might be their top of mind issue around vaccination
- > Ask the person to look at the DECISION cards and pick the one(s) that most closely describe how they feel about making a decision about COVID-19 vaccination

- > Ask them what they see in the cards and which ones suit them best
- > Once the person has picked the cards you can then follow up with open questions such as:
 - “So, is that how you are feeling too?”
 - “Can you tell me about that?”
 - “What can I help you with?”

ADVISE & ACT

- > Concerns will naturally float to the top
- > Acknowledge and affirm their concerns and their thinking about how to move forward
- > Offer guided information to alleviate fears and remind them of the benefits of vaccination

Step 2:

Now set out the BENEFITS CARDS ([available to download here](#))

(Using all the cards at once may be too overwhelming and too lengthy in a short timeframe. If time is limited [signpost them to the website](#) or, if available, give them a set of cards and arrange a follow up appointment.)

ASSESS

- > Look at these cards together and put them in order of the benefits that are most important to the person

ADVISE & ACT

- > As you are doing this, have conversations about each of the benefits
- > Have supplementary information to hand about the benefits and risks¹

By the end of your brief conversation and exploration of the cards, we hope the person in front of you will have moved closer to a decision around vaccination.

If available, offer the person a set of cards to take away to think further and share with friends.

1. <https://www.immunisationcoalition.org.au/resources/corical/>
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccinations-handling-consent-refusal-by-people-presenting-for-vaccination>
<https://www.science.org.au/education/immunisation-climate-change-genetic-modification/science-immunisation>

Supporting information for General Practice and General Practitioners

Making the most of your brief intervention

Personal skills

Develop a rapport

- > Developing trust and empathy is an important part of effective communication particularly for health-related issues where people may have uncertainty
- > Use a private space or consulting room to have more detailed discussion about vaccination
- > Show acceptance
 - Acceptance is not the same as agreement. Acceptance is to accept non-judgementally what the person says and respect what they believe to be true

Demonstrate empathy

- > Pay attention to non-verbal aspects of communication e.g. maintain eye contact
- > Active listening (see below)
- > Acknowledge and respond to emotions e.g. *"You seem to be uncertain and anxious about vaccination. What can we do to help?"*

Be curious and encourage conversation

- > Make the person feel heard and valued. This leads in turn to an informed decision
- > When discussing vaccination with more than one person, ask the more vulnerable person their opinion first (e.g. ask the child before the parent)
- > If further information is needed (e.g. discussion with the GP) then try and do it whilst the person is present, so as not to lose the opportunity

Ensure effective communication skills

- > Check out existing levels of awareness and literacy
- > What’s important to them: what matters to them when making a decision?
- > Use open questions:
 - How far along are you in making a choice?
 - Tell me what you know about the benefits of having COVID-19 vaccination?
 - Tell me what you know about the risks of having a COVID-19 vaccination?
 - Which benefits are the most important to you?
 - Which risks cause you the most concern?
 - Who else is involved in making the decision?
 - Do you have enough information to help you make a decision? What additional information would help you to make a decision?

Offering information

- > Provide just the right amount of information to allow the person to decide
- > Too much information can be overwhelming and not enough information may be a barrier to decision-making
- > Provide the information as part of a guided conversation
- > Use a ‘just in time’ approach – as questions arise in the mind of the person, support their decision-making
- > Active listening is critical
- > Encourage talk by using techniques such as echoing and prompts such as ‘uh huh’
- > Paraphrase e.g. *“So your concern is mostly about the potential long term side effects about vaccination?”*
- > Summarise e.g. *“So I think I’ve heard you say that you would be prepared to consider COVID-19 vaccination for your son, if you could be reassured about the potential cardiac side-effects. You’re particularly worried about this because he had a heart murmur as a newborn.”*

Language is important

- > Use simple language
- > Make sure information and handouts also use clear simple language
- > Consider available CALD resources relevant to the person’s needs

Framing your messages

- > Frame messages in a way that implies ownership e.g. *“we have received stock of the Booster vaccine for COVID-19 and we can allocate you a dose now”*

Getting Information across

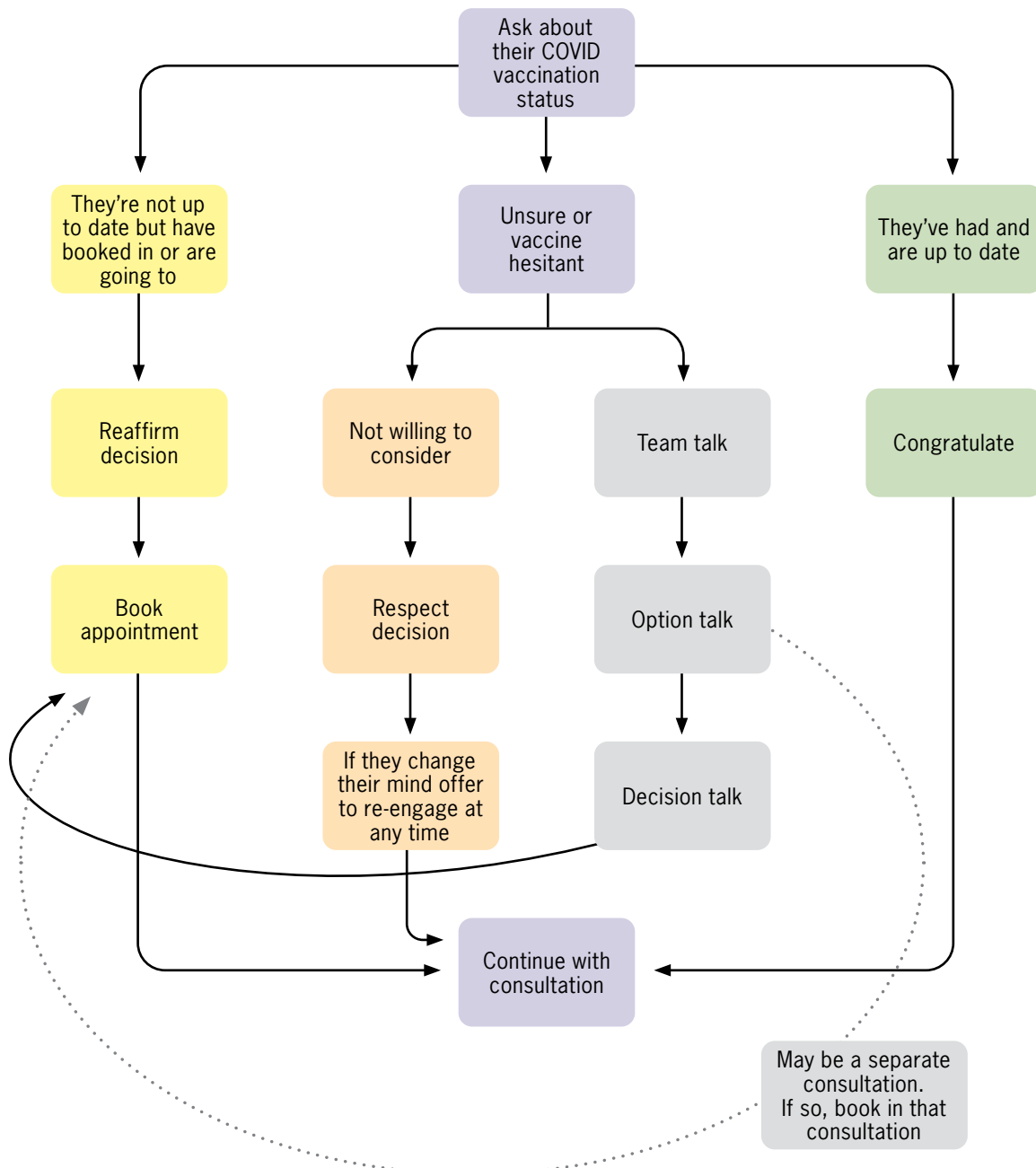
- > Provide information (rather than advice) to build on the person’s existing knowledge and on their strengths, balancing factual information with their personal values. e.g. *“It’s great that you are looking at all the different website and social media for information about the vaccine. Tell me what information is important for you and we can go to a trusted source and see what they say.”*
- > Maintain a list of approved/quality websites that you can refer people to (your PHN may be able to assist)
- > Use decision-making tools to support information provision

Key Strategies**Brief intervention**

A brief intervention describes practices that aim to identify opportunities to improve health and motivate an individual to act on the opportunity. They are often used for alcohol and other drug related issues. The intervention is short and personalised and is often undertaken in a structured and systematic way into routine clinical practice. The 3A’s approach to ASK, ADVISE and ACT in a simple brief intervention that may be familiar to many people working in primary care. The Tip Sheet at the beginning of this document shows you how to use this approach using IWTS resources.

Nudging

Nudges are interventions that modify the person’s behaviour in a predictable way and without forbidding any options. Nudging has been shown to be effective in the context of various health promotion strategies.



Adapted from Smoking Cessation Advice: Healthcare Professional Training, EU smoking cessation programme 2021

Shared decision-making

Shared decision making brings together evidence-based medicine with the person’s preferences into a process where the clinician and the person (and their family/carer) make the decision about vaccination together. It offers an opportunity to have a dialogue about risks and benefits of vaccination and taking into account the person’s values, preferences and circumstances. It has relevance in the context of vaccine hesitancy.

There is no one way to undertake shared decision-making. It can be considered in three parts:

1. Team talk
 - Acknowledge that a choice exists and that they will be supported in making that choice
 - For COVID-19 vaccination, the first choice is whether to have the vaccination or not; for some people a second choice is which vaccine they have
 - Understand what matters to the person
 - Discuss the risk and benefits in the context of the person’s values and preferences
 - Provide the right amount of information based on the person’s prior knowledge and level of understanding
2. Option talk
 - Discuss the risk and benefits in the context of the person’s values and preferences
 - Provide the right amount of information based on the person’s prior knowledge and level of understanding
3. Decision Talk
 - Decision talk aims to get to a preference-based decision
 - Decision aids are helpful for those who are displaying some vaccine hesitancy. The IWTS BENEFIT and DECISION cards are useful aids ([available to download here](#))

Team Based Approach

- > Use the practice team to support you in engaging the person
- > Have a practice team meeting. Run through the OWTS resources and principles together and discuss opportunities for their use

- > Identify roles for different members of the team eg:
 - Can the nurse check the Australian Immunisation Register?
 - Can the receptionist help by mentioning COVID-19 vaccination to people who phone for other appointments or with other queries
 - Can the practice manager undertake clinical system data searches of those people eligible for COVID-19 vaccination
 - Can the practice manager send targeted messages to these people?
- > Consider how best to integrate IWTS brief interventions into your daily practice and achieve best outcomes as part of the team’s regular workflow
- > Scale expectations up or down each day with consideration of available staff, competing demands and energy levels. Be realistic
- > Check in with your team. Share and celebrate your team’s success. Every intervention is a chance to support people in making the most informed decision they can

Recall and reminder systems

- > One of the most effective nudges is utilising reminder and recall systems²
- > Identify people who are due a vaccination and proactively contact them (eg your practice manager and PHN may be able to help with undertaking searches of your clinical system)
- > Use the person’s preferred means of contact to send them a reminder or recall.
 - If using written material use the tips provided above on language and framing
 - Make it easier for the person to undertake the default action (eg if sending an email or SMS reminder, then provide a link on your booking system for COVID-19 vaccination)
 - If there’s no response to the first reminder send a second reminder with an adjusted message

2. https://www.pencs.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/20200323_COVID-19_RecipeBooklet_GeneralPractice_CATPlus_.pdf



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