

Resources for Discussing Medical Misinformation

This chart provides resources to help you communicate with patients about medical misinformation. Many of these resources are intended for use by the public, so you can share them with patients, or use their wording to help frame your explanations in easily understandable terms.

Resources with general tips for communicating with patients who have been exposed to confusing or inaccurate medical information
• <i>Messaging for Trust in Health Communication</i> from the Coalition for Trust in Health Information (https://trustinhealthandscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/MessagingForTrustHealth_508-1.pdf) ○ A summary wallet card is available at: https://trustinhealthandscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/MessagingTrustWalletCard-508-1.pdf. • <i>A Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation</i> from the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General (https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/health-misinformation-toolkit-english.pdf). • <i>Using Psychological Science to Understand and Fight Health Misinformation</i>, a consensus statement from the American Psychological Association (https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/misinformation-consensus-statement.pdf). • <i>The Public Health Communications Guide to Misinformation</i> from Public Health Communications Collaborative (https://publichealthcollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/The-Public-Health-Communicators-Guide-to-Misinformation.pdf) • <i>A Practical Guide to Prebunking Misinformation</i> from a collaboration between University of Cambridge, BBC Media Action, and Jigsaw (a team at Google)(https://prebunking.withgoogle.com/docs/A_Practical_Guide_to_Prebunking_Misinformation.pdf) ○ “Prebunking” is a preventive measure used to counter misinformation before it spreads. • <i>Tackling Rumors and Understanding & Strengthening Trust (TRUST) in Public Health</i> from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (https://centerforhealthsecurity.org/trust)
Resources and tips to combat vaccine misinformation
• General ○ Advise patients to be skeptical of things they see on the social media about vaccines, as much of the information is false. ○ Ease fears using our resource, <i>Vaccine Adherence: Addressing Myths and Hesitancy</i>. ○ See the CDC’s page, <i>Explaining How Vaccines Work</i> (https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/basics/explaining-how-vaccines-work.html). ○ To counter concerns about a link between vaccines and autism, see <i>Do Vaccines Cause Autism?</i> from Autism Speaks (https://www.autismspeaks.org/do-vaccines-cause-autism). ○ To address concerns about fetal cells in vaccines, see Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia resource, <i>Vaccine Ingredients</i> (https://www.chop.edu/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-safety/vaccine-ingredients/fetal-tissues). ○ For patients who prefer “natural immunity” over vaccines, explain that it is not worth the risk. Our resource, <i>Vaccine Adherence: Addressing Myths and Hesitancy</i> provides examples of disease risk vs vaccine risks. ○ See the CDC’s page, <i>How Vaccines are Developed and Approved for Use</i> (https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/basics/how-developed-approved.html).

- Flu vaccines - Our chart, <i>Communicating About Flu Vaccination</i>, helps answer questions about flu vaccine efficacy, use in immunocompromised or pregnant patients, and more. - See the CDC's <i>Misconceptions About Seasonal Flu and Flu Vaccines</i> at https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevention/misconceptions.html to help address concerns such as getting the flu from the flu vaccine.
- COVID vaccines - Our chart, <i>COVID-19 Vaccines</i> (US)(Canada) has a frequently asked question section that addresses safety and efficacy questions. - The CDC's <i>COVID-19 Vaccine Basics</i> has an infographic to help explain how mRNA vaccines work (https://www.cdc.gov/covid/vaccines/how-they-work.html).
- Childhood vaccines - See the CDC's <i>Multiple Vaccines at Once</i> (https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/about/multiples.html). - To counter concerns about a link with autism, see <i>Do Vaccines Cause Autism?</i> from Autism Speaks (https://www.autismspeaks.org/do-vaccines-cause-autism). <i>Talking to Patients About Measles, Vitamin A and the Importance of Vaccination</i> is available from the Infectious Diseases Society of America at https://www.idsociety.org/science-speaks-blog/2025/talking-to-patients-about-measles-vitamin-a-and-the-importance-of-vaccination/.
Resources regarding supplements
- General - Look up information about safety and efficacy of specific supplements using our <i>NatMed</i> database. - Dietary Supplement Fact Sheets are available from the NIH's Office of Dietary Supplements (https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/list-all/).
- Supplements for infectious diseases (e.g., colds, flu) - See <i>Dietary Supplements for Immune Function and Infectious Diseases</i> fact sheets from the NIH's Office of Dietary Supplements for healthcare professionals (https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/ImmuneFunction-HealthProfessional/) and patients (https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/ImmuneFunction-Consumer/). - See <i>Dietary Supplements in the Time of COVID-19</i> fact sheet from the NIH's office of Dietary Supplements for healthcare professionals (https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/COVID19-HealthProfessional/).
- Supplements for brain health - Our chart, <i>Alzheimer's Disease Pharmacotherapy</i> has a section on natural products for dementia.
- Supplements and fad diets for weight loss - See <i>Dietary Supplements for Weight Loss</i> fact sheets from the NIH's Office of Dietary Supplements for healthcare professionals (https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/WeightLoss-HealthProfessional/) and patients (https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/WeightLoss-Consumer/). - See <i>Staying Away from Fad Diets</i> from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/diet-trends/staying-away-from-fad-diets).

Resources regarding generic and biosimilar drugs
• To help explain the benefits of generic drugs to your patients, the FDA has patient education materials available at https://www.fda.gov/drugs/generic-drugs/patient-education. • Get our FAQ, <i>Facts About Biosimilars</i>. • To learn more about the approval process for biosimilars, see information from the FDA at https://www.fda.gov/drugs/biosimilars/review-and-approval.
Resources regarding the FDA prescription drug approval process
The FDA has several resources that are appropriate for patients, including: • Frequently Asked Questions About the FDA Drug Approval Process (https://www.fda.gov/drugs/special-features/frequently-asked-questions-about-fda-drug-approval-process). • Video series: <i>Overview of Our Role Regulating and Approving Drugs</i> (https://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-consumers-and-patients-drugs/overview-our-role-regulating-and-approving-drugs-video-series).
Resources regarding sunscreens
• Get our FAQ, <i>Shedding Light on Questions About Sunscreens</i>.

Users of this resource are cautioned to use their own professional judgment and consult any other necessary or appropriate sources prior to making clinical judgments based on the content of this document. Our editors have researched the information with input from experts, government agencies, and national organizations. Information and internet links in this article were current as of the date of publication.

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