COMMON HEALTH Coalition
Together For Public Health

Updated October 14, 2025

Shared Clinical Decision-Making Guide on Respiratory Vaccines for Clinicians

What is Shared Clinical Decision-Making (SCDM)?

Shared clinical decision-making – also known as individual decision-making – is similar to any other vaccine conversation in which clinicians talk with their patients about the benefits and risks of vaccination for them. These types of discussions (or "counseling") on benefits and risks already occur often – both for recommended vaccines with shared clinical decision-making (e.g., COVID-19 vaccination for healthy children and adults, or HPV vaccination in some adults) and routine vaccines.

Who Can Participate in Shared Clinical Decision-Making for Vaccines?

Primary care physicians, specialist physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and pharmacists can practice shared clinical decision making in all 50 states.

How to Do Shared Clinical Decision-Making?

Multiple options - and you're probably already doing it! Here are some example conversations:

Conversation 1:

- *"I recommend you (your child) get the updated COVID-19 vaccine today. The vaccine information sheets you have explain the vaccine's benefits and potential risks."*
- *"Do you have any questions about the vaccines that you want to talk about?"*

Conversation 2:

- *"I see that like you (your child) are due for your COVID-19 vaccine today. Generally, if you are older or have medical conditions, you are more likely to benefit from the vaccine's protection against severe disease. These vaccines cut the risk of being hospitalized by about half. The risks of vaccination are low and rare. The information sheet you reviewed shared some additional considerations."*
- *"What questions or concerns might you have that I can help answer about vaccine?"*

Conversation 3:

- *"Now is when I recommend the updated COVID-19 and flu vaccines for you (your child)."*
- [Patient has concerns about side effects]: *"I understand that you're worried about COVID-19 vaccine side effects and that's perfectly normal. Most people have mild side effects - like a sore or red arm - or no side effects after getting a COVID-19 vaccine. What's your main concern?"*
  - *"Serious reactions to vaccines can happen but are rare. For every 1 million doses given, we see five or fewer people have a severe allergic reaction."*
  - *"Heart inflammation after a COVID-19 vaccine is rare. The risk of this kind of heart inflammation is much higher after getting COVID-19 infection than after vaccination itself."*
  - *"You can get flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines at the same time. Getting them together can save you time, so you don't have to come back for another visit. …"*

If the patient chooses to not get vaccinated after a shared discussion, try again: *"I respect your decision. I'm happy to answer any additional questions, and we can revisit at your next appointment."*

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Documenting Shared Clinical Decision-Making:

No additional documentation is required for health insurance reimbursement.

Sample EHR Documentation (e.g., dot phrase, smart phrase): *The patient/caregiver and I engaged in shared clinical decision-making about the benefits and risks of the 2025-2026 COVID-19 vaccine. This discussion included an opportunity for them to ask questions. No contraindication to vaccination was identified, and the patient/caregiver and I collaboratively determined the patient would benefit from vaccination. A COVID-19 vaccine was ordered in the context of shared clinical decision making and educational materials were provided.*

Where applicable for patients with underlying conditions add: *The patient has _____(indicate underlying condition).*

Frequently Asked Questions

Can a medical assistant provide shared clinical decision-making for vaccines?

- No, they cannot – but they can administer vaccines in most states both for recommended vaccines where there are clinical nuances (e.g., HPV vaccination in some adults) and routine vaccines that are broadly recommended.

Are pharmacists in all states able to provide vaccines through shared clinical decision-making for all ages?

- While pharmacists have the training, experience, and expertise to do shared clinical decision-making, whether they can vaccinate all ages may differ by state based on their scope of practice and authority.

Can a pharmacy tech provide shared clinical decision-making for vaccines?

- No, they cannot – but they can administer COVID-19 and flu vaccines in all states.

Can standing orders be used for vaccines with a shared clinical decision-making designation?

- Yes, if an appropriate provider is the one doing the vaccine counseling and administration (e.g., a nurse, a pharmacist).

Additional Resources on Shared Clinical Decision-Making for Vaccination

- **CDC guidance and FAQs**
- **American Pharmacists Association article on Shared Clinical Decision-Making**
- **American Academy of Pediatrics News Article on Shared Clinical Decision-Making**
- **Champions for Vaccine Education, Equity + Progress (CVEEP) report on Shared Decision Making for Vaccines**
- **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia article on Shared Clinical Decision-Making**
- **The Announcement Approach Training and Tools**