



Busting Vaccine Myths

Agenda



1. What does the social media landscape look like?
2. Why do people believe myths?
3. We need you!
4. How to PREbunk myths
5. How to DEbunk myths



Common myths



tumor defense systems

fragments injections basic cell processes formulation of mrna vaccines
new analysis widespread misinformation death
ability vaccine young adults spike protein
virus cdc report **cancer** covid vaccines way for tumors
breaking mrna vaccines **vaccines** teens primary defenses
fatal cardiac arrest body evidence that covid vaccines
breakdown dna process large b-cell lymphoma
manufacturing process key tumor suppressor proteins



Turbo cancer myth



“So, in summary, the COVID vaccines have at least three mechanisms by which they could start a cancer, or they could promote an existing cancer, and it may occur more rapidly because tumor defense systems are taken down,” said [@PMcCulloughMD](#).

“That’s what we call turbo cancer.”



10:30 AM · Apr 16, 2024 · 405.6K Views



Sudden cardiac deaths



EPOCH HEALTH

HEALTH > HEALTH NEWS > COVID NEWS

CDC Study Doesn't 'Debunk' Link Between COVID-19 Vaccines and Sudden Deaths

Study falsely represented by reporters, while authors failed to note earlier findings.



By [Zachary Stieber](#), Reporter

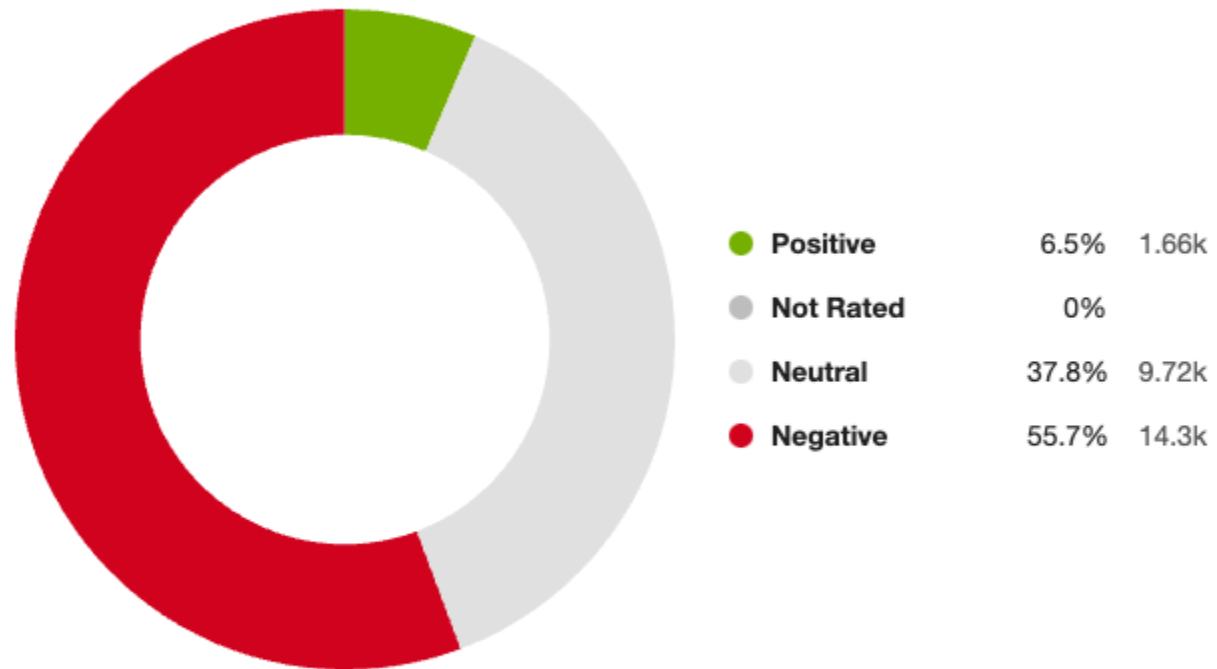
4/13/2024

Updated: 4/13/2024

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Vaccine sentiment online





Why do myths take hold

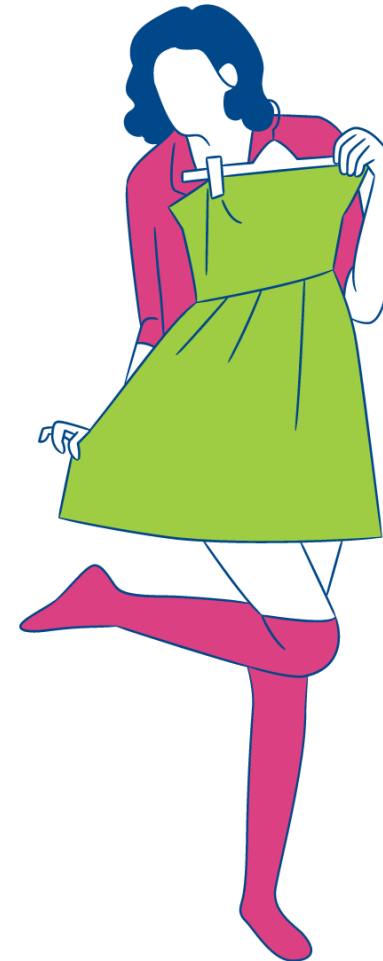
And how our brains betray us



Why do people fall for myths

Myths fit into people's beliefs about:

- Their identity
- The people they can trust
- What is normal



Identity

Identity can lead someone to refuse vaccines if they see themselves as:

- Too strong to need a vaccine
- Natural/intuitive
- A member of a group that has superior knowledge about science
- Part of a group that has been part of historical medical malpractice
- Smarter than doctors and scientists



Whom to trust

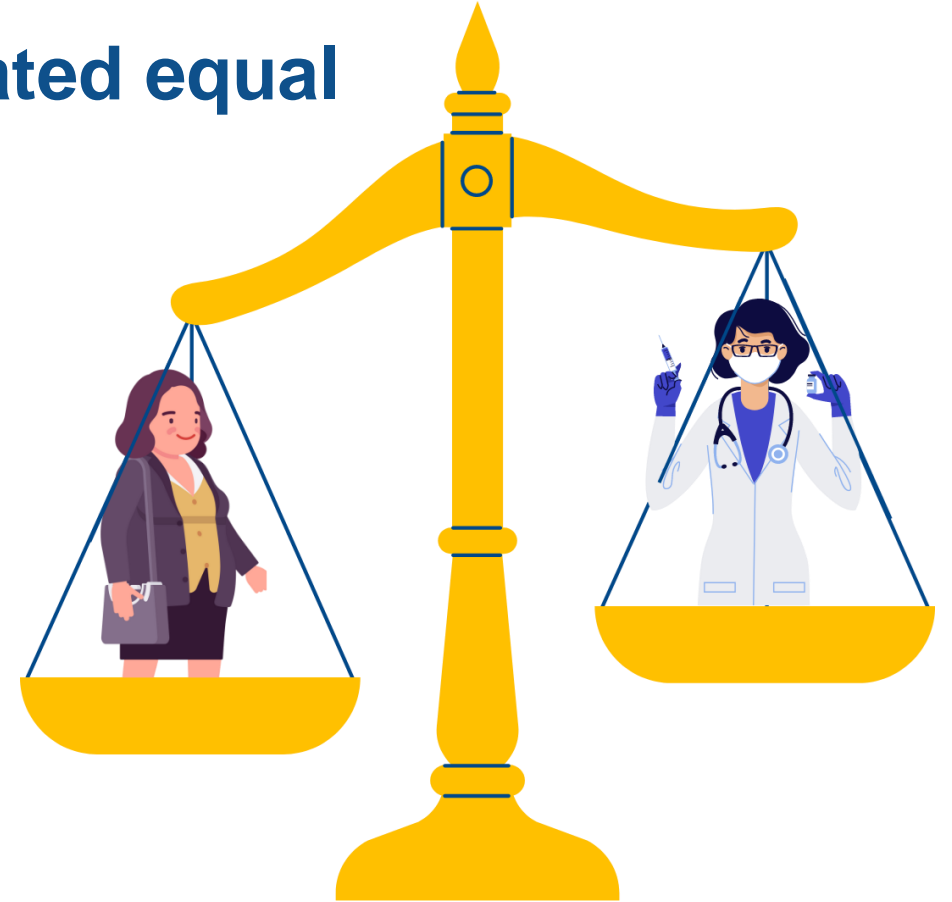
Not all trusted messengers are created equal

One study found that

- quality of a relationship
- frequency of communication

Outweighed

- expertise
- authority
- knowledge



Social norms



What's normal?

- We are more likely to conform to what is considered normal in our peer-group or community
- We use others to help us make our own decisions





We need you!

To prevent the spread of vaccine myths



Access to providers matters

People who do not have access to providers are less likely to get vaccinated

The result is health inequity:

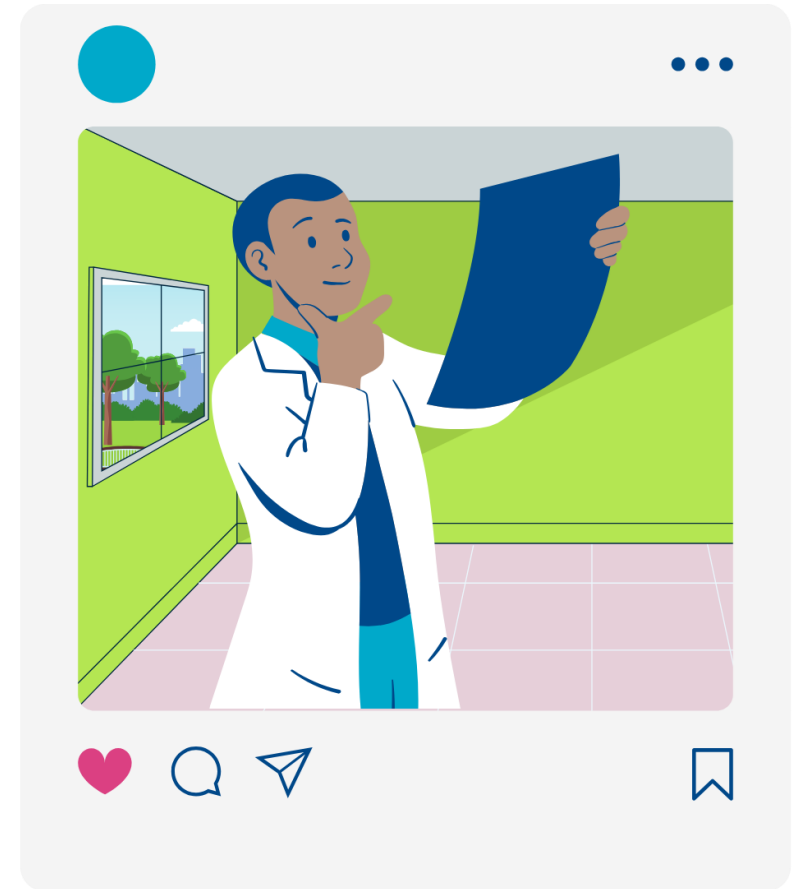
- Latino/Hispanic people are 15% less likely to get vaccinated
- African American/Black people are 25% less likely.



Access to information

Access to vaccine information cannot depend on access to a medical home

- We need healthcare experts speaking out in public spaces
 - Social media
 - News media
 - Town halls
 - Back-to-school events



Social Media Videos



voices4vaccines

Voices for Vaccines

Follow

313 Following 516 Followers 4466 Likes

<https://www.voicesforvaccines.org/donate>

Videos

Liked



Vaccination is part of a h...



Debunking vaccine misinf...



Debunking vaccine misinf...



Debunking RFK Jr. on my...



We debunk anti-vaccine r...



Go watch "A Shot in the ...



voices4vaccines

Follow

Message

+8

...

589 posts 1,829 followers 499 following

Voices for Vaccines

@voices4vaccines

Nonprofit organization

Visit our website to share your story with us ❤️

[voicesforvaccines.org/donate](https://www.voicesforvaccines.org/donate)

Followed by lizditz, ilovevaccines, coolsnekkat + 49 more



Vaccine Sto...



Just the Facts

POSTS

REELS

TAGGED



▶ 167



▶ 1,027



▶ 338



▶ 844



Blima Marcus





Prebunking

Inoculating others against misinformation



Inoculate against myths

Prebunking

It's easier to tell people how and why myths are wrong before they hear them from a source they trust



Prebunking works!

Help people **anticipate** the kinds of myths they will be exposed to

- Sign up for our newsletter to learn what is trending now
- Make sure trusted experts in your community are given a big platform
- Flood the field! People believe myths because they are far more prevalent online than the truth is



Give people a framework



How mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines Work

Understanding the virus that causes COVID-19.

Coronaviruses, like the one that causes COVID-19, are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface, called **spike proteins**. These **spike proteins** are ideal targets for vaccines.

What is mRNA?

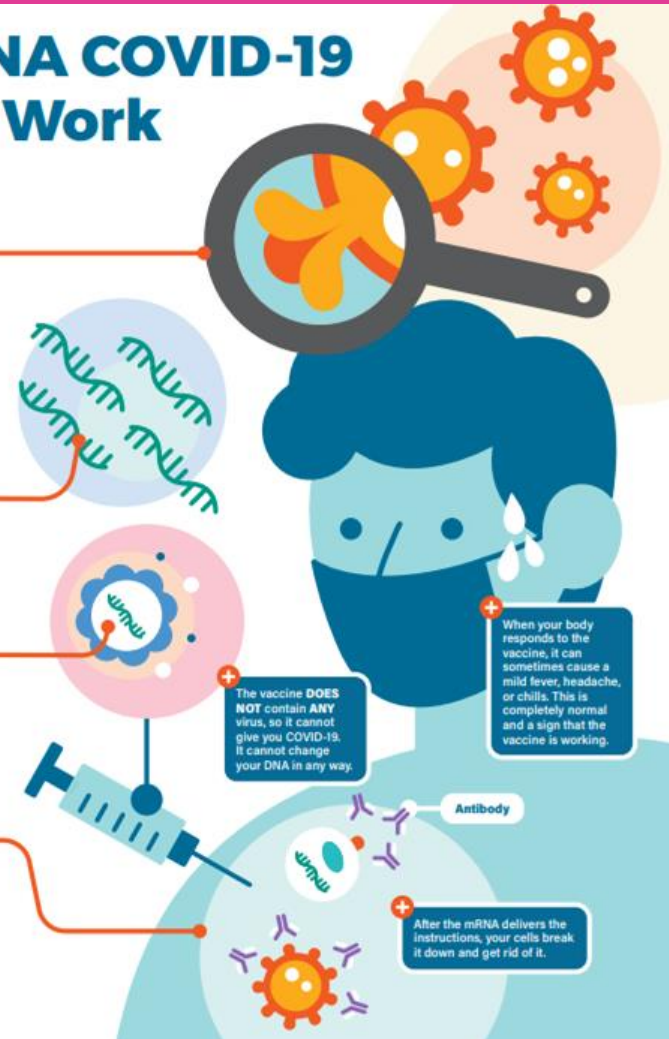
Messenger RNA, or mRNA, is genetic material that tells your body how to make proteins.

What is in the vaccine?

The vaccine is made of mRNA wrapped in a coating that makes delivery easy and keeps the body from damaging it.

How does the vaccine work?

The mRNA in the vaccine teaches your cells how to make copies of the **spike protein**. If you are exposed to the real virus later, your body will recognize it and know how to fight it off.



When people have a framework of understanding how vaccines work, their first response may be checking a story against that framework.



Social Math

Social math tells a story with data by showing large numbers in terms of time or place or making comparisons with familiar things

What is the real risk of a vaccine allergic reaction?

Your child is more likely to be an olympian than have an allergic reaction to a vaccine.



Odds your child will be struck by lightening in his lifetime...

1 in 3,000

voices
for vaccines

Source: National Geographic

Odds your child will be an Olympian...



1 in 380,228

Source: TeamsUSA.org



Odds your child will be elected to congress

1 in 557,094

Source: US House & Senate Websites

Odds your child will have a vaccine related allergic reaction
1 in 1,000,000

Source: CDC





Responding to hesitancy

The 4-A method



Background: the VFV method



Remember to do 4-A:

ASK



“What is your main concern?” Encourage the patient to be specific and name their hesitancy. “What is the one thing that concerns you most? Can you tell me more about it?”

ACKNOWLEDGE



Recognize that the person you’re talking to already has knowledge. “It’s clear you’ve really looked into this.”

AFFIRM



That it’s ok to have questions. “That’s a great question, I heard that too so I looked into it.”

ANSWER



Get permission to share some facts. “Can I share with you the facts...”
OR “Can I get you some credible sources so your research helps you make an informed decision.”



Ask

Get the other person talking so you can learn more about what's behind their hesitancy.

- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask questions to drill deeper into their concerns
- Ask them to pinpoint their main concern



Acknowledge

Listen carefully for what the person has gotten right

- Let them know that you respect them for digging
- Acknowledge when they have correct information
- Acknowledge that they are capable of making good choices



Affirm

Build trust by supporting the idea that

- It's okay to have questions
- Plenty of people have similar concerns
- You have looked into this or you are willing to look into it



Answer



Get **permission** to provide an answer. Do not provide answers without permission.

- If at all possible, help them arrive at the correct answer by asking questions that build on what they know
- If not possible, provide information on what you know and how you know it.
- If necessary, offer to do more searching and get back to them.

Answering is your last step. Don't skip the others.





Specific myth strategies

And how to undo their damage



How to frame a scary story

People make decisions based on emotions

Remind them that:

- They don't have the full story (medical history)
- A safety signal requires the same symptoms and timing multiple times
- Doctors cannot weigh in because of actual HIPAA
- A lot of stories don't jibe with science



Teach others what's legitimate



- Assess the source and think critically
- Go beyond the headlines
 - Headlines are usually not written by authors
- Identify the author
 - Are they an expert in the field? If not, do they have a fact checker or an editor?
- Check the date
 - Is this debunked because it has been addressed?
- Analyze any supporting evidence
 - And if you don't know how, ask an expert, like your doctor!



Addressing misinformation



In the clinic

- Use a presumptive recommendation
- Provide opportunities for families to learn how vaccines work, how they are made, and how they are tested **BEFORE** they need to make the choice
- If hesitancy appears, use motivational interviewing
- All staff in the clinic should be on the same page



Addressing misinformation



Among colleagues

- **Listen**
 - Listen to learn what led them to this misinformation
- **Be empathetic**
 - Emphasize that it's important to ask questions to get them addressed
- **Connect them with credible and trusted sources**
 - “Would it be okay with you if I looked this up using a source I might trust?”
 - “Should we ask an expert we both trust about this?”



Addressing misinformation



On social media

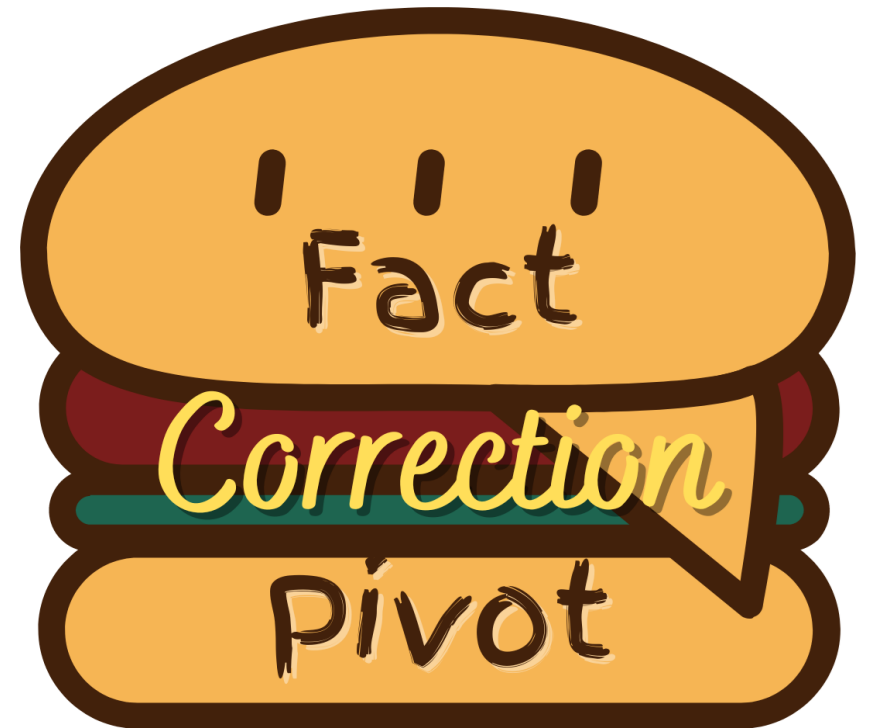
- Avoid repeating the misinformation
 - “Some people have concerns about this vaccine, but science has shown us that it is well-tested and effective” with specific details if possible.
- Use a truth sandwich
 - A fact
 - Explain how the statement was incorrect
 - End with a fact



Addressing misinformation

In public (addressing something in front of a group or audience)

- Emphasize that addressing questions is important
- Use the truth sandwich again!
 - With one twist...
- Pivot to an important point you want to make about the main topic you are there to address



Addressing disinformation



Sometimes, disinformation requires specific interventions:

- Report it online
- Expose what disinformers gain
- Support expertise whenever possible
 - Explain what makes someone an expert
 - Elevate the voices of trusted experts from within the community



If nothing works?

Do a pull-push-pull

- Accept the person. Reject the misinformation
 - I value you,
 - but I cannot agree with what you are saying
 - even though I want to remain close



Debunk to your heart's content



Sign up for our weekly newsletter:
VoicesForVaccines.org/Resources

The screenshot shows the top section of the website. On the left is the logo for "voices for vaccines", which includes a stylized family icon. To the right of the logo is the tagline "credible vaccine information for families, from families" with a small pink heart icon. Below this is a navigation bar with the following items: "Vaccines" with a dropdown arrow, "Science" with a dropdown arrow, "Resources" with a dropdown arrow, "Get Involved", "Donate", and a search icon. A yellow arrow points from the "Resources" menu item to a search box that contains the word "Search". Below the navigation bar, a pink banner with the text "We're families..." is partially visible.

