British Society for
immunology

www.immunology.org

Top tips for engaging with the public about vaccines

Most people who are unsure need the chance to ask their questions. **Listen to and acknowledge concerns**. Be open-minded, empathetic and reassuring.

Be prepared to have more general conversations about immunity and vaccines. **Help people understand how the immune system works**. Use examples in history of vaccines preventing infectious diseases such as smallpox.

Have a **continual dialogue** rather than an occasional conversation. Building trust needs two-way interaction and time. Be persistent and **keep the door open**.

Use **trusted resources** to make discussions easier and more engaging. Support people to get correct and clear information and let them make their choice.

Acknowledging what we do and don't know develops trust. **Don't be afraid to say you don't know**, be honest and point in the direction of appropriate resources.

Don't lecture, overload with facts or complex immunology. Avoid using jargon and keep your language simple. Bite-sized information is more accessible. **Focus on the take home message**.

If comfortable and appropriate, **share your own experience**. Be genuine and personable. The public will get to see that scientists are just human.

Unless you are clinically trained, you should **not attempt to answer clinical questions** and should make it clear that you are not a medical doctor. Suggest that they visit their GP.

If you find yourself in a conversation about anti-vax sentiment, ask them why they think 'X'? Where did they hear this? **Acknowledge** what they have told you and **communicate** what you know or provide appropriate resources.

Don't take anything personally and **avoid being confrontational**. It's OK to end the conversation if you feel uncomfortable, but always be polite.

For more information on how the BSI is supporting our members and the wider immunology community to have effective conversations with the public about vaccinations visit **www.immunology.org/vaccine-engagement-starts-home**