

Address Vaccine Concerns That Keep Going Viral

Top Takeaways

- Reassure patients that the small amounts of aluminum adjuvants in vaccines are not linked to serious health problems or acute aluminum toxicity.
- Explain that mRNA vaccines do not enter the cell nucleus or alter a patient's DNA.
- Emphasize that receiving multiple vaccines does not overwhelm the immune system, while delaying doses may leave patients unprotected.

Some patients still have hesitancy and questions about vaccines.

Continue to carefully approach concerns with empathy, understanding, and evidence...to help build and maintain trust in immunizations.

Aluminum ingredients in vaccines are toxic. *Rumor.*



Small amounts of aluminum adjuvants (aluminum hydroxide, etc) have been added to some vaccines since the 1930s to boost immune response.

But there have been growing claims that these adjuvants cause serious reactions (autoimmune disorders, asthma,

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autism, etc).

Reassure that multiple studies show aluminum-containing vaccines are NOT linked to these issues or acute aluminum toxicity.

Help put exposure in perspective. Over the course of 18 years, kids will get a total of 4 to 7 mg of aluminum from vaccines...versus about 70 to 400 mg absorbed into the body naturally from their diet.

Use our *Vaccine Adherence: Addressing Myths and Hesitancy* resource for various strategies to help you address patient concerns.

mRNA vaccines (COVID-19, etc) change your DNA. *Rumor.*

Point out that mRNA vaccines enter cells to make proteins for the immune system to recognize and mount a response. But mRNA vaccines do NOT enter the cell's nucleus...DNA stays unaffected.

Clear up confusion between mRNA vaccines and gene therapy...which is evolving for some conditions (sickle cell disease, etc).

Explain that gene therapy replaces, repairs, adds, or turns off faulty genes within a patient's actual DNA.

This can be done by injecting patients with modified viruses made to deliver genetic instructions into the nucleus...or editing patients' own cells in a lab and reinfusing them back into the patient. And this technology is expensive...each dose costs millions of dollars.

Help patients evaluate other claims they hear from social media, family, and friends using our *Discussing Medical Misinformation* chart.

Giving multiple vaccines overwhelms the immune system. *Rumor.*

A common fear is that getting too many vaccines or combos can overload and suppress the immune system...or cause autoimmune diseases.

But overwhelming evidence shows this isn't the case.

Plus, delaying or dividing up immunizations to "spread out" exposure may increase the risk for doses to be given late...or not at all.

Put vaccine antigen exposure into context. Across 18 years, vaccines will expose a child to about 165 antigens. On the other hand, infants and young kids get naturally exposed to thousands of antigens EACH DAY.

Stress that data show most vaccines aren't associated with autoimmune reactions...with specific and rare exceptions.

For example, MMR may lead to 1 case of thrombocytopenia out of every 30,000 doses. And 1 or 2 cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome may be seen per every 1 million flu vaccine doses.

Get our *Communicating About Flu Vaccination* FAQ to answer common questions about vaccine options, side effects, contraindications, etc.

And listen to our October 2026 *Rumor vs Truth* podcast where our editors dig deeper into other vaccine claims making the rounds.

Key References:

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