



OUR COMMUNITY, OUR HEALTH

Follow-up Resources to Stem Vaccine Misinformation



SOME TIPS TO PROTECT AND EMPOWER YOUR COMMUNITY

Expecting and accepting that news about science and medicine will evolve is difficult, but it's necessary to prevent disinformation about public health from spreading. We can use simple media literacy skills and fact-checking resources to defend against the harmful effects of vaccine misinformation and embed healthy digital behavior into the way friends, family members from teenagers to elders, and neighbors engage with news and share information on and offline.

Healthy news diets can lead to healthy individuals, as well-informed news consumers equipped with accurate information will make better informed decisions about their health. But what makes up a healthy news diet in the first place? How can we verify the content and confirm its accuracy? Let's start with some [basics](#).

▶ Start with making a distinction between **disinformation** and **misinformation**.

Disinformation is demonstrably false information created with the intent to deceive the public, while misinformation is false information that has been created and/or shared in error. The difference is in the intent.

▶ Conduct a scan of your news and health information intake.

Are you diversifying your news diet or does all of your news come from a single source? Newsfeeds on social media can be limiting and polarizing, so be sure you're proactively seeking [credible sources](#).

▶ Pause and question your reactions to things you see online.

Vaccine disinformation thrives on engagement—likes and shares—on social media platforms; with this in mind, headlines are often written by bad actors to [inflame your emotions](#) and encourage you to react by disseminating their posts without thinking, even if they're false or misleading. So before taking the bait, take a step back and question how what you see makes you feel.

▶ Understand what you're seeing: **Distinguish between news and opinion.**

Some stories look like news but are actually opinion pieces. Is it a news article? Is it a friend tweeting about their opinion? Some advertisements are designed to read like articles. Before hitting share or forward, consider the type and purpose of content first.

▶ Check the captions of images and videos.

Images, videos, memes, and other visual content can be intentionally miscaptioned or presented out of context to mislead. Consider the time and place of what you're seeing. [Here's one tool](#) to get you started and a helpful [video guide from the News Literacy Project](#).

▶ Be wary of "truths" that are actually misleading.

Use caution when investigating statistics online, as "kernels of truth" can be removed from their context and [misrepresent reality](#).

HOW TO TALK TO FRIENDS, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO SHARE VACCINE MISINFORMATION

Like many polarizing topics, it can be difficult to approach conversations about vaccines and especially so when folks don't share the same understanding of the facts. But having those conversations is crucial to saving lives. Here are some helpful tips to guide your efforts:

- ▶ **Before engaging with someone, verify that the vaccine information in question is indeed misleading or false.**

Before you attempt to correct someone who has shared what you believe to be misinformation, [try to fact-check](#) the story yourself. Check out the "About Us" page on unfamiliar sites and run the claim through Google or another search engine alongside the terms "true," "false," or "hoax." This is called "[lateral reading](#)." Also make sure to practice "[click restraint](#)" because often misinformation gets repeated in search results. Preparing thoughtful responses to some of the most frequent misinformation narratives around vaccination and COVID-19 can be a helpful step to take in advance. When redirecting someone to credible facts, reference credible sources like the [CDC](#) or the [WHO](#) as well as trusted community sources including local Black journalists, [doctors](#), and community leaders, and remember that YOU are a trusted source too.



- ▶ **Consider others' perspectives and possible factors affecting their beliefs.**

If you message someone about their post containing false information or approach someone in-person, take care to use a supportive and positive tone. Otherwise, you risk alienating the person, making them less receptive to the information you're trying to share. However you engage, do so with empathy. If you're engaging via social media consider reaching out through a private message rather than publicly correcting, which can sometimes be perceived as shaming.

- ▶ **Avoid escalation and have an exit plan.**

Sometimes the conversation may not go well. Your friend, family or community member might get defensive when met with your fact-check or vaccination suggestion, and the exchange may no longer be constructive. If it seems like the conversation is moving in that direction, just remember that it can be hard for people to accept corrections, and it is tough to change attitudes—no matter how well-grounded your comments are.

PEN AMERICA GUIDES AND MORE RESOURCES

It can be daunting to sift through the endless supply of online resources for finding credible and accurate content about the vaccines, so we've sourced a few of the best below. Check them out to learn about how disinformation on topics like vaccines and public health can infiltrate our newsfeeds and how we can use media literacy skills and fact-checking resources to stop the spread.

- ▶ National Action Network's [Health Equity page](#) with news and resources
- ▶ [The Black Coalition Against COVID](#): Trustworthy info from science and medical care experts
- ▶ [Dr. Melissa Clarke's show, "Excuse Me Doctor!"](#) which streams live on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)
- ▶ [Covid-19 vaccine misinformation and narratives surrounding Black communities on social media](#), report by First Draft
- ▶ [THE CONVERSATION/LA CONVERSACIÓN #BetweenUsAboutUs](#)
- ▶ [NAACP COVID Know More](#): research, resources, and stories to help ease the uncertainties and safeguard your community
- ▶ Visit the [Center for Black Health and Equity](#) for COVID-19 Prevention Resources and more
- ▶ Media literacy workshop and discussion [Our Community, Our Health](#), and more information about PEN America's [Community Partnership Program](#)
- ▶ [PEN America's Guide on COVID-19 and Disinformation](#) (available in [Spanish](#) here)
- ▶ From the CDC: [Myths and Facts about COVID-19 Vaccines](#)
- ▶ [Vaccine Misinformation Management Guide](#) by UNICEF, First Draft, and others
- ▶ [Disinfo Defense Toolkit](#) compiles resources to help you and your community fight back against the disempowering effects of misinformation.
- ▶ [Guides and Resources on vaccine \(mis\)information from First Draft](#)
- ▶ [Factcheck.org](#)
- ▶ [Washington Post Fact Checker](#)
- ▶ [NewsGuard Coronavirus Tracking Center](#)

Contact PEN America at medialiteracy@pen.org to learn more.

Please keep in touch!

And a special thanks to our event co-sponsors the [Black Coalition Against COVID](#).

