

Behavioral Health Tips for Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine

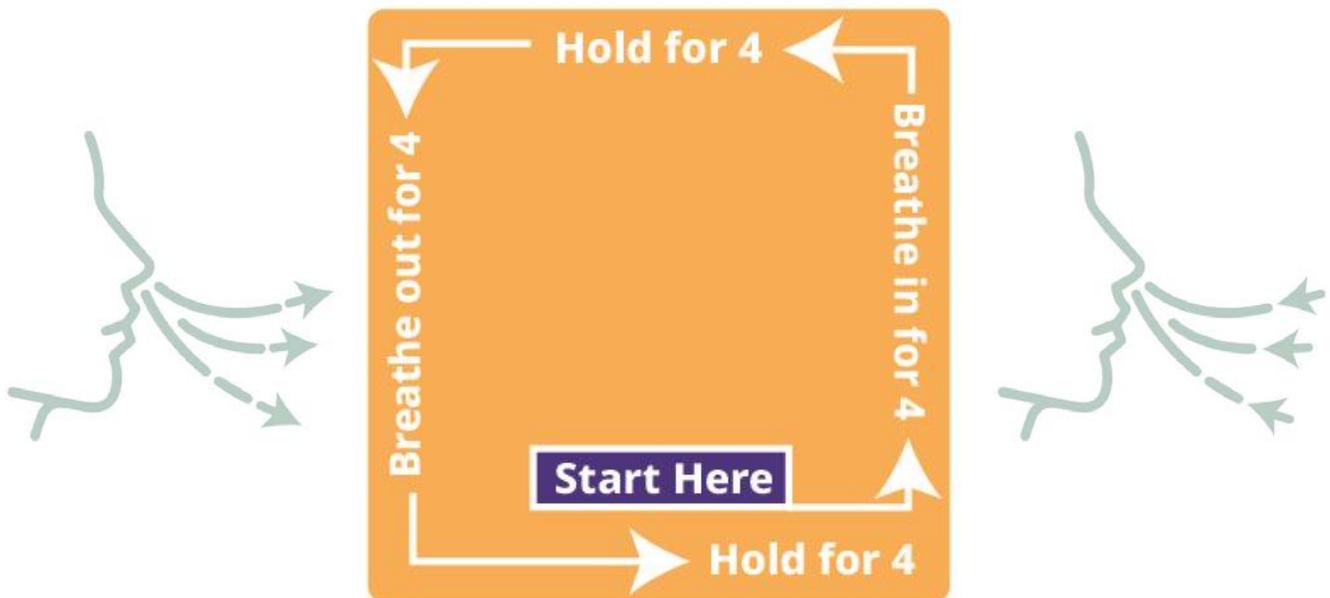


Even if you are eager for protection from COVID-19, getting the shot can still feel stressful or scary.

Use these tips to stay calm and communicate clearly with your provider when you get vaccinated.

If you are feeling anxious about getting the vaccine:

- **Ask your provider for resources** about the vaccination process, vaccine side effects, or other topics you are concerned about.
- **Slow down your breathing.** Slow, calming deep breaths can help you avoid panic.
 - Breathe slowly, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count to four for each in-breath and each out-breath. For example, breathe in through your nose for one...two...three...four, hold for one...two...three...four, then breathe out through your mouth for one...two...three...four, hold for one...two...three...four, and repeat.



- It might help to think about drawing a square in your head as you breathe. Start at a corner and draw a line for each count of four as you breathe in, hold, breathe out, and hold. Keep going until you have a full square. If you're still not feeling calm, draw more squares as you breathe and count. Some people like to draw an imaginary box with their finger as they practice this kind of breathing.

- **Distract yourself from anxiety or panic by focusing on something else.** Here are some things to try:
 - Talk to someone about something random (while wearing a mask and watching your distance).
 - Pay attention to a few small details of what’s happening around you.
 - Count backwards from 50 or try to say the alphabet backwards.
 - Think about fun plans that you have or what you would like to do on the weekend.
 - Look around and find three things you hadn’t noticed before.
- **Understand that anxiety in a situation like this is normal.** What you are going through can be a typical response to a stressful event. It doesn’t mean that there is something wrong with you if you are having a hard time.
- **Look away and find something else to focus on** if you are uncomfortable with needles. Take a deep breath as you get the shot, and then breathe out slowly. Try to relax your arm, shoulders, and neck.

If there is something you want to say to your provider, or have a question or concern:

- Take the time you need when communicating a question, concern, or thought.
- If you are feeling frustrated or worried, slow down your speaking rate if you can. Take some deep breaths to stay as calm as possible when talking to your provider.
- Wearing masks can make it difficult for everyone to communicate effectively since we rely on non-verbal cues when communicating. We are all experiencing that challenge and your provider is here to listen and help with your concerns.
- If you feel you are in crisis, please let your provider or site staff know so they can get you help.

Resources

- **WA 2-1-1:** Call 2-1-1 to get connected to community resources.
- **Washington Listens:** Call 833-681-0211 to talk to a support specialist who will listen, help you cope with the stress you’re feeling, and connect you with local resources.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** Call 800-273-8255 (English) or 1-888-628-9454 (Español).
- **Crisis Connections:** Call 866-427-4747, or text HEAL to 741741.
- **Washington Warm Line:** Call 877-500-9276.
- **Washington State COVID-19 Response**
 - Mental and Emotional Well-Being Resources: coronavirus.wa.gov/wellbeing.
 - Find Help with Food, Housing, and Other Necessities: <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/partner-toolkit/covid-19-article-library#findhelp>.



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