

 Talking with vaccine-hesitant patients

A quick guide for practices to support respectful, informed conversations

 Why These Conversations Matter

- Vaccine-hesitant people are often looking for answers, not refusing outright
- Your role as a trusted healthcare provider can make a real difference
- These conversations aren't "one and done"—they're part of a longer journey.

 Key Principles

- **Empathy first:** Understand their perspective without judgment
- **Avoid conflict:** Disagree politely, don't debate
- **Listen actively:** Focus on what they're saying, not what you'll say next
- **Validate concerns:** Acknowledge fears without dismissing them
- **Encourage questions:** Open-ended questions lead to deeper understanding
- **Ask permission:** Before offering information, ask if they're open to hearing it
- **Be patient:** Belief change takes time—don't push too hard.

 The BERT Communication Framework

Use the BERT communication framework which is a simple framework to guide your conversation:

- **Benefits** – lead with a positive benefit: e.g. when whānau are immunised they will not need to stay in quarantine if they are exposed to measles. This may be an unexpected benefit they had not thought of
- **Evidence** – the MMR vaccine is safe and effective. The MMR vaccine has an excellent safety record and has been used in New Zealand since 1990. Mild reactions such as fever or pain/redness at the injection site are normal and show that your immune system is responding to the vaccine
- **Recommend** – tell whānau you recommend the MMR vaccine. Hearing this from a trusted health professional makes a difference
- **Think** – give whānau autonomy and time to make decisions; let them go away, think, and discuss with whānau. Let them know they are always welcome to come back and talk about it more.