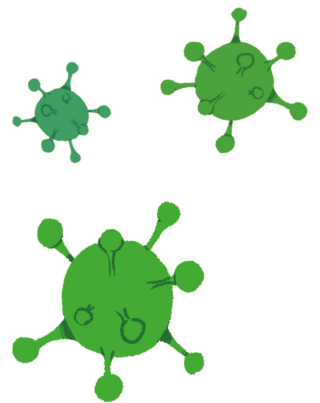




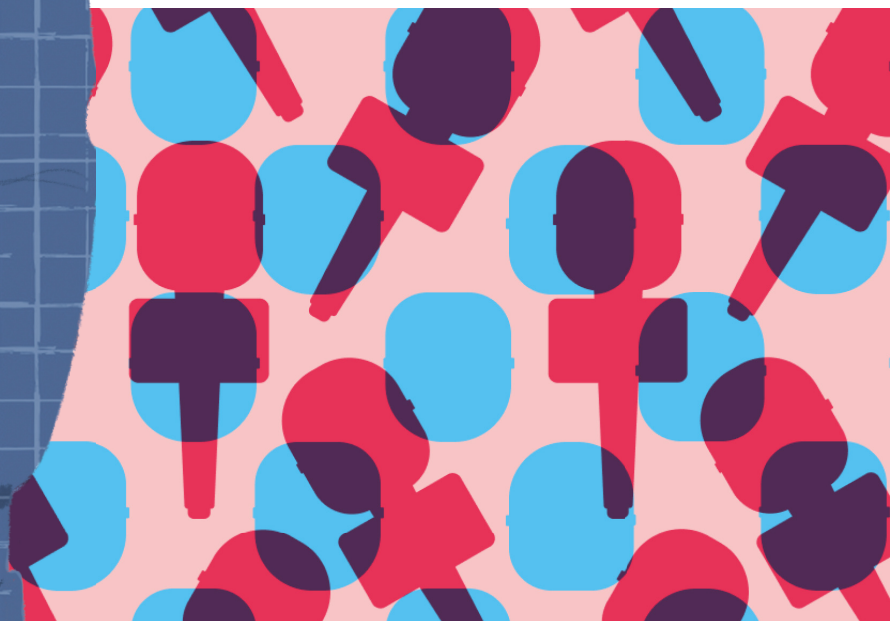
Guidelines for Dialogue

JOURNALISTS AND COMMUNICATORS: HOW TO APPROACH COVID-19

Material for journalists
and communicators



PAHO



This material offers guidelines for communicating issues related to COVID-19 and vaccination in a way that prevents the spread of misinformation.

The information published in these guidelines is based on data available through September 2022. Knowledge about the virus, the disease, and vaccination is constantly being updated and recommendations may change.

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What to do?

1

When faced with the spread of rumors that contradict the health authorities or convey dubious information (e.g., “COVID-19 is a hoax,” “there is no need to wear masks,” “vaccines are harmful,” “vaccines are made with

metals, contaminated blood, or poison”, etc.), check **the responses given by health authorities, health personnel, specialists, and academics, as well as sources from official websites.**

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2

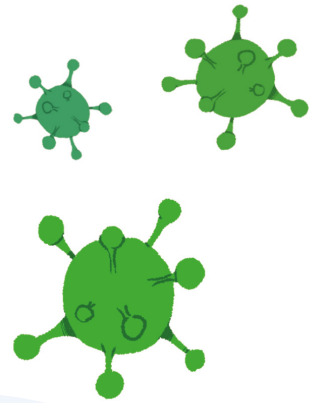
Provide accurate information about when and where to seek medical help.

3

Provide links or direct the public to reliable sources where they can find more information, such as <https://www.paho.org/en> or <https://www.who.int/en>.

4

Report on and recount the experiences of patients who have been infected and overcome the disease, including the stories of people who have recovered after being seriously ill. Report on communities and individuals taking precautions against the disease, such as vaccination and other health measures.



5

If there are examples of people with “long COVID-19”, include these stories.

6

Disseminate fact-based information and use the most current data and statistics that official sources have provided. Always specify date ranges for the information.

7

Help explain the context and disseminate the recommendations of health experts to the public.



What not to do?

1

Avoid sensationalist and alarmist language. Sensationalism is used to exaggerate situations and capture the attention of others. It diverts us from the purpose of informing

people. Instead, **convey accurate facts and information about the disease as reported by public health experts and national authorities.**



2

COVID-19 can affect anyone. **Avoid stigmatizing individuals and groups who contract the disease.** This can discourage people from seeking care or practicing healthy behaviors. Build trust and show empathy.

3

Do not share (on your media outlet's platforms or your personal social media accounts) videos or audios obtained through online chats or social media without first **verifying the accuracy of the messages.** Do not amplify the voices of those who wish to alarm, confuse, or misinform.




4

Before posting an opinion or a viral news story, **think about the negative impact** it could have on the perception of topics such as vaccination.

5

Although a news story may come from a source that seems reliable (recognized media, community leaders, or municipal authorities), due to the complexity of an issue such as COVID-19, it is best to **consult experts in the health field before repeating the information.**





These sources, as well as the official sites of local ministries of health, can help the spread of myths, disinformation, and inaccurate data:

- <https://www.paho.org/en>
- <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/immunization>
- <https://www.paho.org/en/covid-19-vaccines>
- <https://www.who.int/home>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines>

This material has been prepared based on documents from the Ministry of Health of Guatemala and with the support of the PAHO Country Office.

