



When patients refuse vaccines

As a provider, you are essential in discussing the benefits of vaccines with all patients and their caregivers. There should be an opportunity to answer questions and address any concerns about vaccines. Discussions should include the risks of not being immunized.

If a vaccine is refused, this should be appropriately documented in the patient's medical record. A *Vaccine Information Statement* for the vaccine(s) discussed should be given to the patient. A signed *Vaccine Refusal Form* should be scanned into the patient's chart.

In addition to proper documentation in the medical record, the following codes should be submitted to indicate that a vaccine was refused.

Z Codes

- **Z28.21 – Immunization not carried out because of patient refusal.**
 - Use this code when the patient themselves declines the vaccination, regardless of what the reason is.
- **Z28.82 – Immunization not carried out because of caregiver refusal.**
 - Use this code when the patient is a minor and the vaccination is declined by a parent or legal guardian on their behalf.
- **Z28.1 – Immunization not carried out because of patient decision for reasons of belief or pressure from a group.**
 - Use this code when the patient's decision is based on religious beliefs or pressure from a group.
- **Z28.81 – Immunization not carried out due to patient having the disease.**
 - Use this code when the patient had already had the disease the vaccine was intended to prevent.

CPT Codes

99401-99404: These codes can be used for preventive medicine counseling, which may include counseling a patient or caregiver regarding vaccine refusal. These should be used if the counseling was provided separately from a preventive care examination.

- **99401:** Counseling provided for approximately 15 minutes
- **99402:** Counseling provided for approximately 30 minutes
- **99403:** Counseling provided for approximately 45 minutes
- **99404:** Counseling provided for approximately 60 minutes

Strategies for addressing vaccine refusals

For patients who refuse vaccines, there are strategies you can use. Consider using the below strategies to support your patients who refuse vaccines.



Engage in active listening.

Ask open-ended questions to understand the reasoning for the patient's refusal and identify concerns, like fear of side effects.



Utilize motivational interviewing techniques.

Assist the patient toward making an informed decision.



Highlight the benefits and discuss the risks.

Educate the patient on the benefits of vaccination and the risks of not vaccinating.



Revisit the conversation.

Add a reminder in the patient's chart to discuss this again at a future appointment.

