

Building Bridging Statements

A Practical Communications Tool for Acknowledging Tough Public Health Questions and Building Trust

Public health communicators play a vital role in saving lives and keeping people healthy by focusing on the most important, timely, and credible information available. Bridging statements are an effective communication tool to stay grounded in core messages and build trust with fact-based communications.

Bridging Statements: Getting Back to the Core Message

Bridging is a tool that can help you answer questions in a way that conveys your most important fact-based messaging and corrects misinformation. Bridging statements are phrases that help you acknowledge the question, briefly respond, and then convey what you want people to know. Here are some examples of bridging statements:

This is an evolving issue, but what is clear right now is...

I'm hearing that question a lot, and what I want people to take away is...

I understand your concern, but what we know is...

I know that this has been challenging, but the bottom line is...

Examples of Bridging Statements to Answer Tough Public Health Questions:

Why aren't public health officials doing more to stop new variants from spreading?

A: *This is an evolving issue, but what is clear right now is* as long as COVID-19 spreads, new variants are expected. Variants emerge through naturally occurring mutations in viruses. For example, the flu virus mutates often, which is why doctors recommend an updated flu vaccine each year. Getting an updated COVID-19 vaccine decreases the likelihood you will get sick from emerging variants and makes it less likely you will need hospitalization or die if you get infected.

I'm trying to get pregnant and I've seen social media videos claiming that vaccines could cause permanent health issues. Is this true?

A: *I understand your concern, but what we know is* there is no evidence that fertility, pregnancy, or development is impacted by vaccines. It's also inaccurate to claim that vaccines increase the likelihood of pregnancy risks or complications. Vaccination is recommended for anyone who is pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant. Vaccines provide protective antibodies to both the pregnant person and the baby. While severe vaccination reactions are extremely rare, they can cause long-term health issues.