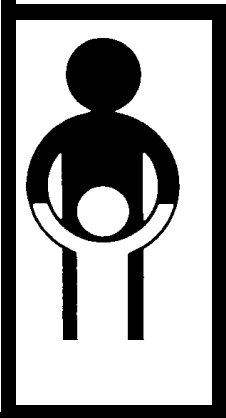


Module 2:

How to communicate with mothers about immunizations



GLOBAL PROGRAMME FOR VACCINES AND IMMUNIZATION
EXPANDED PROGRAMME ON IMMUNIZATION



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Introduction

One of your responsibilities as a health worker is to ensure that mothers¹* receive and understand the information they need in order to have their children and themselves fully immunized.

In a health facility the quality of person-to-person communication between health workers and mothers determines whether the mothers will understand and follow the advice given. It also affects the way the mothers feel about the staff and, therefore, the likelihood of their returning. If correctly carried out this communication can significantly influence the health of children and/or mothers.

Communication with mothers is best effected:

- During immunization sessions.
- During group discussions.

Communication with mothers individually, during immunization sessions, is the more common. However, mothers frequently have to wait in health facilities before they or their children receive their immunizations. If your health facility has the staff and time, waiting periods provide an excellent opportunity for communicating with mothers.

Learning objectives

This module indicates the five pieces of essential information concerning immunization which you should communicate to mothers during an immunization session or a group health discussion, and describes the basic skills needed for doing so. These skills can also be used when you communicate with community members about any other health topic.

When you have completed the module you should be able to:

- List the five pieces of essential information on immunization which you should communicate to mothers.

¹ Please note: as in Module 1 the word "mother" may refer to a person other than a child's mother who is nevertheless caring for it, or to a woman of childbearing age who is not yet a mother, whether she is pregnant or not, who attends a health facility for tetanus toxoid immunization

- Communicate this information to mothers by:
 - Asking them questions.
 - Reflecting back and acknowledging their answers.
 - Praising and encouraging their helpful practices.
 - Advising them what else to do and why.
 - Checking their understanding.

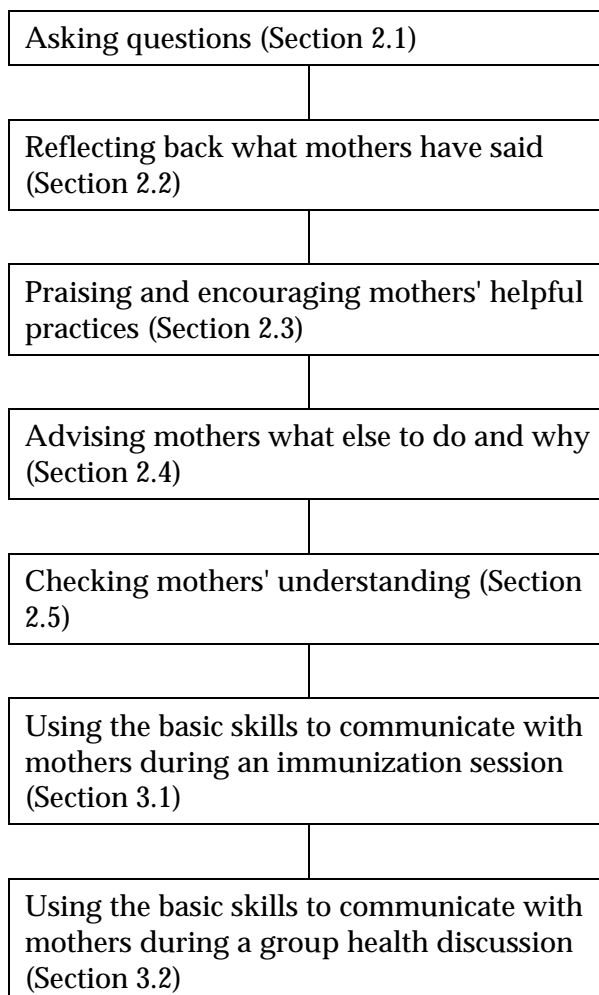
You will be asked to read, do exercises and practise the skills. Finally, you will draw up an action plan for communicating with mothers when you return to your health facility. All the materials you need are in this module. Keep it for reference in your job.

When communicating with mothers you should always:

- Treat them respectfully in a sincerely helpful way, and smile.
- Give them practical, clear advice.
- Use words and phrases that they use rather than technical language.
- Address each mother by her name so as to reassure her that you are particularly interested in her progress.
- Be patient.

The flow-chart below shows the steps that will be discussed in this module.

Flowchart



1. Review of essential information on immunization

Whether talking with mothers during an immunization session or a group health discussion you have to communicate five pieces of essential information:

- The date and time of the next immunization.
- Where to attend for the next immunization.
- The number of visits the child needs to make to the health facility in order to be fully immunized, and/or the number of visits the mother needs to make in order to receive a full course of tetanus toxoid.
- What side-effects may occur.
- What the mother can do about these side-effects.

Communicate this information as follows:

- **Be specific about the date, time and place.** Tell the mother the specific time you want her to bring her child back or to return herself for her own immunization. Tell her to come back to the health facility or, if you want her to attend elsewhere, indicate the place. Inform her what time the health facility is open and remind her to bring the immunization cards.
- **Be specific about the number of visits needed.** During immunization sessions and group health discussions you have to check the immunization cards so that you can tell each mother how many immunizations she and her child still need and how many times she needs to return. Congratulate her frequently on the number of immunizations she and her child have received, and encourage her to complete the schedules.
- **Be specific about possible side-effects.** Advise mothers on what side-effects can be expected, on what is normal, and on what to do about side-effects if they occur. This shows that you care about their children's comfort and that you want to ensure that the mothers can cope.



Exercise A: Review of essential information on immunization

The purpose of this exercise is to give you practice in communicating the five pieces of essential information to a mother during an immunization session. Read the contents of the box and answer the questions in writing. Use the local terms and phrases you would use when talking with mothers. If you are doubtful about any of the answers, see Annex 1.

Today is Monday, May 10th. An immunization session has just started and mothers are waiting with their babies. You invite the first mother and her baby into the immunization room. You greet the mother by name and praise her for bringing her child to be immunized. You ask to see their immunization cards. You find that the child's second doses of DPT and OPV and the mother's second dose of TT are due. What essential information should you give the mother during the session?

1. How many more visits to the health facility does the child need In order to be fully immunized

2. How many more visits to the health facility does the mother need in order to complete the tetanus toxoid series?

3. What is the date and time of the child's next immunization?

4. What is the date and time of the mother's next immunization?

5. Where should they attend to receive the next immunization?

6. What side-effects might occur following the child's immunization?

7. What can the mother do about these side-effects?

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

2. Basic skills for communicating with mothers

There are five basic skills you need to learn in order to communicate well with mothers. Good communication is a dialogue in which you and the mothers exchange information. Too frequently, however, this does not happen: the health worker talks and the mothers only listen. The basic skills presented here will help you to avoid this kind of situation. The skills you use to communicate with mothers individually during immunization sessions will also help you to communicate with them during group discussions.

Skill 1: Asking questions: Begin your immunization session or group health discussion by questioning the mothers. The advice you give will depend on the mothers' answers. The mothers are more likely to listen and learn if you are talking about things important to them. Continue asking questions so that you can be sure that the mothers understand you.

Skill 2: Reflecting back what mothers have said: In doing this you demonstrate that you understand what they are trying to tell you. You acknowledge that you recognize their concerns and feelings. It is important that you reflect back what they say in a non-judgmental manner. If you show that you are listening to them and care about what they say there is an increased likelihood that they will take your advice.

Skill 3: Praising and encouraging mothers' helpful practices: It is likely that the mothers are doing some good things concerning their children's and their own immunizations. The fact that they have brought their children to a health facility should be praised. Be specific when you praise and encourage mothers: if you praise them for what they are doing correctly there is an increased likelihood that they will take your advice.

Skill 4: Advising mothers what else to do and why: Even if the mothers are doing some things correctly they may have some misconceptions or may not have all the information they need. Give specific advice and only one message at a time. Use words and phrases that the mothers will understand.

Skill 5: Checking mothers' understanding: Ask questions to find out what the mothers have learnt from what you have told them. This helps you to discover exactly what they have understood from your advice and enables you to complete their information or correct any misunderstandings.

2.1 Basic skill: asking questions

Knowing how to ask questions is one of the most important skills you can learn. It ensures that an immunization session or group health discussion becomes a dialogue rather than a lecture in which you talk and the mothers listen.

Asking questions can be used to:

- Discover what a mother knows about the five pieces of essential information.
- Discover what a mother has done about her own and her children's immunizations, including what she has done to treat reactions.
- Check what a mother remembers and understands about what you have told her.
- Discover what problems a mother might have in carrying out your advice, and help her to find solutions to them.
- Check whether a mother has any questions about what you have said or done.

You should ask both open questions and closed questions, but never ask leading questions (see Module 1, section 2.3.3, page 16).

It is often necessary to ask a follow-up question in order to understand completely what a mother is telling you. This is especially true if you have initially asked a closed question. The next exercise will help you to practise using open, closed and follow-up questions.



Exercise B: Asking open, closed and follow-up questions

1. Write down three closed questions you might ask during an immunization session or a group health discussion.

2. Write down three open questions you might ask during an immunization session or a group health discussion.

3. On the next page there are some closed questions, each followed by a "Yes", "No" or other short answer. An example of a follow-up question is given alongside the first answer. Write down suitable follow-up questions in the spaces provided.

Exercise B (continued)

Closed question	Mother's answer	Follow-up question
What day did I ask you to return for your child's next immunization?	Monday, August 4th.	What problems would you have in returning on that day?
When will you bring your baby back for her next immunization?	In a month.	
Did your child have any reaction to the last immunization?	Yes.	
Do you have any questions that I can help you with?	Yes.	
Has your child completed her immunization series?	No.	

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback

2.2 Basic skill: reflecting back what mothers have said

Reflecting back what mothers have said shows them that you are truly listening to them and want to respond to their needs. This can be done by either parroting or paraphrasing.

- **Parroting** is repeating exactly what a mother has said. It is the simplest way of reflecting back but does not necessarily show that you really understand what she has told you. When parroting you may wish to repeat only part of what the mother has said.
- **Paraphrasing** is saying in your own words what a mother has told you. For example, a mother might say: "I don't really understand how many times I need to bring my baby to be immunized. It seems as if every time I turn round I have to bring my child to the health centre". To paraphrase this you might say: "You aren't really sure how many times you need to bring your child to be immunized. I can see that you must feel frustrated at having to bring your child to the health centre so often".

In paraphrasing you also acknowledge the mother's feelings. This is very important. If a mother thinks you understand her and are sympathetic to her feelings there is an increased likelihood that she will take your advice. However, when you are paraphrasing, you must be very careful not to change the mother's meaning.

When reflecting back, make sure that neither your tone of voice nor your body language indicates that you disapprove of or disagree with what the mother has said. You are not making a judgment but acknowledging her feelings and showing that you understand her words.



Exercise C: Reflecting back what mothers have said

Below are some remarks that a mother might make during an immunization session or a group discussion. In each case, write down how you would parrot and paraphrase her words. Use words and phrases which mothers in your health catchment area would understand.

Example:

A mother says: "I don't know when I'm supposed to return for my child's next immunization."

Parroting: "You don't know when you're supposed to return for your child's next immunization."

Paraphrasing: "You're not quite sure when you're supposed to bring your child back to be immunized. I've no doubt there are other mothers here who aren't sure about that."

1. "My child got spots and I thought it was measles so I didn't bring him for the measles immunization.

Parroting:

Paraphrasing:

2. "I heard that children can't be immunized when they are sick. My baby had a cold on the day of the immunization session so I didn't bring him to the health centre."

Parroting:

Exercise C (continued)

Paraphrasing:

3. "The last time I brought my child to be immunized he got a fever and cried all night. After I gave him manzanilla tea and some antibiotics he seemed to get better. What can I do if that happens again?"

Parroting:

Paraphrasing:

4. "The last I time came to the health centre the nurse offered me an injection but I refused because I thought only children needed immunizations."

Parroting:

Paraphrasing:

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

2.3 Basic skill: praising and encouraging mothers' helpful practices

Your praise for a mother's helpful practices encourages her to continue them, demonstrates your respect for her, and increases the likelihood of her listening to you and acting on your advice.

Every mother who brings her child to be immunized has done at least one thing right: she has brought her child to the health facility. You should thank and praise every mother whom you come in contact with for doing this.

Sometimes only part of what a mother does is correct, and you should praise her for it. For example, she may bring her child to be immunized later than the schedule requires. You could say: "Thank you for bringing your child to be immunized". Then you could advise her when to bring the child for its next immunization.

When listening to what mothers say about immunizations you need to decide what they have done that is helpful. Praise them for this and encourage them to continue doing what is helpful.



Exercise D: Praising and encouraging mothers' helpful practices

Example:

A mother says: "I don't know when I'm supposed to return for my child's next immunization".

What has this mother done that is helpful? How could you praise and encourage her?

You could say: "You did the right thing by bringing your child to be immunized. Thank you for coming".

Below are some remarks that mothers might make during an immunization session or a group discussion. In each case, identify what the mother has done that is helpful. Write down how you would praise and encourage the mothers, using words and phrases which mothers in your health catchment area would understand.

1. "My child got spots and I thought it was measles so I didn't bring him for the measles immunization."

2. "I heard that children can't be immunized when they are sick. My baby had a cold on the day of the immunization session so I didn't bring him to the health centre."

Exercise D (continued)

3. "The last time I brought my child to be immunized he got a fever and cried all night. After I gave him manzanilla tea and some antibiotics he seemed to get better. What should I do if that happens again?"

4. "The last time I came to the health centre the nurse offered me an injection but I refused because I thought only children needed immunizations."

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

2.4 Basic skill: advising mothers what else to do and why

It is unlikely that mothers will do everything exactly as they should, possibly because of a lack of information. Some may even perform harmful actions.

You must advise carefully against undesirable behaviour and suggest alternatives. For example, a mother might give her child antibiotics in response to fever following immunization. You could say: "Your child doesn't need that medicine if she has a reaction to immunization. You could give her a quarter of a tablet of paracetamol. I'll give you some to take home, just in case. The main things are to give her lots of liquids and to continue breast-feeding".

It is important to give advice in a way that shows respect for the mothers rather than making them feel they have done something wrong.

In the previous exercise you were asked to find out what a mother did correctly in four common situations. Now look at the same situations and:

- Decide if the mother has done something harmful.
- Say how you would carefully advise her against any harmful action.
- Say what other advice you should give her.

Remember to use words and phrases which mothers in your health catchment area would use, and give only one message for each action.



Exercise E: Advising mothers what else to do and why

Example:

A mother says: "I don't know when I'm supposed to return for my child's next immunization".

- (a) Has the mother done anything harmful?

No, she has brought her child to be immunized but she lacks the information she needs as to when she should return for the next immunization.

- (b) How would you advise her on this matter?

Tell her the day, time and place for the next immunization.

Write down answers to the following questions:

1. "My child got spots and I thought it was measles so I didn't bring him for the measles immunization."

- (a) Has the mother done anything harmful?

-
- (b) How would you advise her on this matter?

-
- (c) What other advice would you give her?
-

2. "I heard that children can't be immunized when they are sick. My baby had a cold on the day of the immunization session so I didn't bring him to the health centre."

- (a) Has the mother done anything harmful?

-
- (b) How would you advise her on this matter?

Exercise E (continued)

2 (c) What other advice would you give her?

3. "The last time I brought my child to be immunized he got a fever and cried all night. After I gave him manzanilla tea and some antibiotics he seemed to get better. What should I do if that happens again?"

(a) Has the mother done anything harmful?

(b) How would you advise her on this matter?

(c) What other advice would you give her?

4. "The last time I came to the health centre the nurse offered me an injection but I refused because I thought that only children needed immunizations."

(a) Has the mother done anything harmful?

(b) How would you advise her on this matter?

(c) What other advice would you give her?

Remember: always show respect for the mothers' opinions.

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

2.5 Basic skill: checking mothers' understanding

How can you be certain that the mothers have understood and can remember your advice? If asked whether they have understood something, most mothers answer "Yes". This may be true, but, on the other hand, they may be too embarrassed to admit that they have not understood. When you ask this question you cannot expect to discover exactly what a mother has understood.

You therefore have to ask checking questions. Good checking questions are open questions, to which the mothers have to answer more than "Yes" or "No".

Suppose a health worker has just explained to some mothers that they should give a quarter of a tablet of paracetamol to their children if they develop a fever following immunization. The quarter of a tablet has to be crushed to form a powder, which is mixed with water. In addition the mothers should give adequate quantities of liquids to the children and should continue to breast-feed.

A poor checking question from the health worker might then be: "Do you all understand what to do if your child has a reaction to the immunization?"

The mothers can only answer "Yes" or "No". Most will probably nod their heads and answer "Yes". However, the truth may be that they are too embarrassed to admit that they do not understand.

A good checking question would be: "What will you do if your child has a reaction to the immunization?"

Now the mothers can begin to describe exactly what action they will take. You can quickly judge what they understand and then repeat or explain in more detail anything they are not clear about.

Sometimes, however, you may get an incomplete answer to your checking question, even if it is an open one. In that event you have to ask a follow-up question to see if the mothers have really understood all of what you have advised. Let us look again at the above example:

Health worker: What will you do if your child has a reaction to the immunization?

Mother: I'll give him lots of liquids and continue to breast-feed. I'll also give him a quarter of a tablet of the medicine you are going to give me.

Health worker: How will you give him the medicine?

Mother: I'll crush it into a powder and mix it with a little water.

Health worker: Good! You've learnt exactly what to do if your baby has a reaction.

Notice that the health worker gives praise when she is sure that the mother understands all the advice. Praising mothers encourages them to follow your advice in the future.

Besides checking what a mother remembers of your advice it is important to ask questions so as to discover what difficulties she might have in carrying it out. For example, you might advise a mother to return to your health facility for her child's next immunization on a day when she knows she will be travelling to another area for harvesting purposes. You discover this by asking what problems she might have and you then suggest a more convenient health facility.

At the end of an immunization session or a group discussion you should ask the mothers if they would like to ask questions about anything you have said or done.



Exercise F: Checking mothers' understanding

This is a written exercise to give you practice at asking checking questions and praising mothers when they have understood your advice.

In the first column there is a series of checking questions. In the second column a mother's responses are given. In the third column you should write a follow-up question that will help you to discover everything the mother has understood from your advice. If you think the mother has understood all your advice, write down what you would say to praise her.

First checking	Mother's response	Follow-up question
1. Mrs Pardo, when will you return for your child's next immunizations?	In a month.	
2. What will you do if your baby is sick tonight?	I'll continue to breastfeed her and I'll give her extra fluids.	
3. What will you do if your child has a fever?	I'll give her a quarter of a tablet of paracetamol.	
4. What will you do if the child's condition doesn't improve?	I'll bring her back to the health centre.	
5. When will you bring your child back for her next immunization?	I think you told me to come back in a month.	

Exercise F (continued)

First checking	Mother's response	Follow-up question
6. Where should you bring your child to be immunized?	They told me to come back here because this is where my baby's records are kept.	
7. What time of day is the health centre open?	From 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon.	
8. How many more visits do you need to the health centre for your baby to be fully immunized?	I think I need to come back once more.	
9. What will be the immunization given during her next visit?	Against measles, I think.	
10. Will that be the child's last immunization?	I think so ... I think measles is the last one.	

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

3. Using the basic skills to communicate with mothers about immunizations

In this section you will practise using the basic skills during an immunization session and a group health discussion.

3.1 Using the basic skills to communicate with mothers during an immunization session

On the following page is a checklist of the actions every health worker should perform when communicating with a mother during an immunization session. These actions include communicating the five pieces of essential information to the mother and using the five basic skills to do so.

Ask your facilitator for assistance if you have questions about any of the actions.

Checklist 1: Communicating with mothers during an immunization session (essential information the health worker should provide)

Tick if the health worker provides the essential information listed below:

	For mother	For child
Date and time of next immunization.		
Place for next immunization.		
Number of visits to the health facility the child and mother need to be fully immunized.	NA*	
What to do in case of side-effects.	NA*	

Tick each time the health worker demonstrates the following basic communication skills

Asking questions about mother's knowledge and experience.	
Reflecting back and acknowledging what mother has said.	
Praising and encouraging mother's helpful practices.	
Advising mother what else to do and why.	
Checking mother's understanding of what has been advised.	

* Not applicable for the mother.



Exercise G: Communicating with mothers during an immunization session

The purpose of this exercise is to give you practice at using all the skills you have studied in Module 2.

On page 26 there is an **example** of a nurse communicating with a mother during an immunization session. Tick the appropriate space in the "Checklist for communicating with mothers during an immunization session" (page 24) each time the nurse gives a piece of essential information and each time he or she demonstrates one of the five basic skills. Then answer the following questions.

1. What did the nurse do well (the items you ticked on the Checklist)?

2. What could the nurse do better the next time he or she communicates with a mother during an immunization session (any items you did not tick on the Checklist)?

3. Do you think the nurse made a good job of communicating with the mother? Give reasons for your opinion.

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

Example 1: An immunization session

Nurse: Good morning, please come in. Take a seat. Thank you for bringing your baby to be immunized. What's your name?

Pamela: Pamela. And this is Mary.

Nurse: How are you both?

Pamela: Fine, thank you.

Nurse: Do you have Mary's immunization card?

(Pamela hands over the baby's card.)

I see she's been here twice for immunizations. That's very good. After today she needs to make two more visits.

Today we'll give Mary her second dose of DPT. That will help to protect her against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus. We'll also give her a second dose of the vaccine against polio. Do you have any questions about her immunizations?

Pamela: What can I do if she cries a lot, like she did last time?

Nurse: You could try breast-feeding her afterwards. I know it makes mothers unhappy when their babies cry, and I'll be as gentle as I can. But the tears won't last long and she'll be better protected against all those diseases.

Let her lie in your arms while I put these drops against polio in her mouth. Just like last time.

Now, if you let her lie on your lap, facing you, I can give her this injection against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus.

(The nurse gives the injection and turns towards the mother to continue the conversation.)

Did she have a fever after the last immunizations?

Pamela: Yes, and I put a damp cloth on her forehead from time to time. By morning the fever had gone.

Nurse: Very good. You did the right thing. What else did you do?

- Pamela: I wasn't sure what else to do. My neighbour said I should give her an antibiotic, but I didn't.
- Nurse: Good. Antibiotics aren't necessary. But you should breast-feed her more often so that she gets extra liquids. If there's a fever it just means the immunization is working. It will go away after a few hours. Do you have any other questions?
- Pamela: I was really worried when Mary had a fever. Is there anything else I can do if it happens again?
- Nurse: I understand your concern. I get worried when my baby has a fever. If you think the fever is high or that she's in pain, give her a quarter of a tablet of paracetamol. Crush it to make a powder and mix it with water. I'll give you some paracetamol to take home, just in case. And continue breast-feeding.
- If you think she's not getting better, bring her back to the health centre. She looks healthy, though, and I don't expect her to have any other problems.
- So tell me, what will you do if Mary has a fever this evening?
- Pamela: Well, I'll do what I did last time and put damp cloths on her forehead. If her fever is high I'll give her a quarter of a tablet of the medicine you're going to give me.
- Nurse: What else will you do?
- Pamela: I'll breast-feed her more often than usual so that she gets enough liquids.
- Nurse: Very good. Now, her next immunization should be given a month from now. Today is Wednesday, June 12th, so you should come back on Wednesday, July 10th. What problems might you have in coming back then?
- Pamela: Well, I'll need to help my husband with the harvest around that time.
- Nurse: Yes, women have a lot to do during the harvest season. But it's really important that Mary comes back in July. You've done so well up to now. What do you think you can do to make sure she gets her immunization in July?
- Pamela: Well, I'll talk to my mother. Maybe she could bring her.

Nurse: That's a good idea. Tell her the health centre is open from 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. Remind her to bring Mary's immunization card.

What will you say to your mother when you ask her to bring Mary to the health centre?

Pamela: I'll tell her how important it is and when the health centre is open. And I'll make sure she brings the immunization card.

Nurse: That's excellent, Pamela. You're a really good mother. Now, do you have your own immunization card? *(Pamela hands her immunization card to the nurse.)* I see you've had two tetanus immunizations to protect you and your children against lockjaw. That's excellent. I'll give you a third today, and then you'll only need two more. *(The nurse gives Pamela her immunization.)* Your next tetanus immunization will be due in June of next year. Do you think you'll have any problems in coming to the health centre then?

Pamela: No, I don't think so.

Nurse: Do you have any questions about your own immunizations?

Pamela: I don't think so. The last time I was here you explained that mothers need immunizations and that these help to protect babies as well.

Nurse: That's exactly right. When will you need your next immunization and where will you get it?

Pamela: Next June at this health centre.

Nurse: That's right. Make sure you bring your immunization card whenever you come so that we can see if it's time for your next injection. Do you have any other questions about Mary or yourself?

Pamela: No, I don't think so.

Nurse: Well then, thank you for coming today. You are a really good mother, doing this for your baby. I look forward to seeing your mother and Mary on July 10th any time between 8 and 3.



Exercise H: Role play communicating with a mother during an immunization session

This exercise is a role play in which a health worker communicates with a mother during an immunization session. Your facilitator will organize the play and assign the roles. After the role play a group discussion will take place.

Role play situation

The immunization session has just started and mothers are already waiting with their babies. The health worker invites the first mother with her baby to enter the immunization room. The child's second doses of DPT and OPV and the mother's second dose of TT are due to be given.

The participants are divided into groups of three:

- One person in each group plays the role of **health worker**. He or she practises communicating the five pieces of essential information, using all the skills that have been learnt for this purpose.
- One person in each group is an **observer**. On the "Checklist for communicating with mothers during an immunization session" (page 24), he or she ticks all the actions that the "health worker" is seen to perform.
- One person plays the role of **mother**. The "mother" tries to act as a real mother would during an immunization session, and decides on:
 - The number of children in her imaginary family.
 - The age of the child under consideration.
 - The number of immunizations the child has had.
 - Her knowledge of, and what she has done about, tetanus toxoid immunization.

After the role play the observer gives feedback to the "health worker" on the quality of her or his communication with the "mother".

First, the "health worker" is praised for what he or she does well (the specific actions that the observer notes during the role play).

Second, the "health worker" is advised about what he or she should do better next time (the **specific actions** that the observer does not see during the role play and does **not** tick on the checklist).

Remember to be very positive in both praise and advice. The "health worker" should note down the specific actions that were performed well and those requiring improvement the next time he or she communicates with a mother

during an immunization session. The roles should be exchanged until everyone has played that of health worker at least once.

Tell your facilitator when you are ready to begin the role play.

3.2 Using the basic skills to communicate with mothers during a group health discussion

When communicating with mothers during a group health discussion you give them the same five pieces of essential information and use the same basic skills as during an immunization session. However, there are additional things you should do to make the discussion as effective as possible.

3.2.1 Before the discussion

- Greet the mothers respectfully and thank them for coming to the health facility. If possible, greet them individually and by name. Ask mothers their names if you do not know them.
- Ask the mothers to sit with you in a circle. This helps to break down the student/teacher barrier and helps the mothers to be more comfortable when talking about their experiences and asking questions.

3.2.2 During the discussion

- Start by explaining that you would like to talk with the mothers about immunizations and ask them what questions they have. If you are responding to their specific concerns and questions there is an increased likelihood that they will take your advice. Continue to invite questions until you are sure that nobody else wishes to ask one.
- Introduce the pieces of essential information that the mothers have not asked about. Cover all five pieces of essential information during the discussion.
- Use all the basic skills in dealing with each piece of essential information. Try to ask more open questions than closed ones and try not to use any leading questions.
- Go round the group and ask each mother to speak or answer a question. In this way you help to overcome hesitancy or shyness. You can also call on hesitant mothers by name.
- Use words and phrases that the mothers understand. Treat the mothers respectfully and be patient.

3.2.3 Closing the discussion

- Summarize the five pieces of essential information. One of the best ways of doing this is to ask checking questions, to which the mothers can respond individually or as a group. Ask them to share what they have learnt with their husbands, other family members and friends. Finally, thank and praise the mothers for participating in the discussion.

On page 31 there is a checklist of the actions to be performed by a health worker communicating with mothers during a group health discussion. Ask your facilitator if you have doubts about any of these actions.

Checklist 2: Communicating with mothers during a group health discussion (before, during and closing a session)

Before the discussion

The health worker:

- Greets the mothers respectfully.
- Greets them individually and by name.
- Asks for their names if he or she does not know them.
- Thanks the mothers for coming to the health facility.
- Asks them to sit in a circle.
- Sits in the circle with the mothers.

During the discussion

The health worker:

- States that the general purpose of the discussion is to talk about immunizations.
- Asks the mothers what concerns and questions they have about immunizations.
- Uses simple language and words that the mothers understand.
- Demonstrates patience.
- Demonstrates respect for the mothers.
- Calls on each mother by name and asks her to speak.

Closing the discussion

The health worker:

- Summarizes the five pieces of essential information.
- Asks the mothers to share what they have learnt with their husbands, other family members and friends.
- Thanks and praises the mothers for their participation.

The five pieces of essential information and the five basic skills are the same as for an immunization session (Annex 1).

Checklist 2 (continued)

	For mother	For child
Date and time of next immunization		
Place for next immunization.		
Number of visits to the health facility the child and mother need to be fully immunized.	NA*	
What to do in case of side-effects.	NA*	

Tick each time the health worker demonstrates the following basic communication skills:

Asking questions about mother's knowledge and experience.	
Reflecting back and acknowledging what mother has said.	
Praising and encouraging mother's helpful practices.	
Advising mother what else to do and why.	
Checking mother's understanding of what has been advised.	

* Not applicable for the mother

*



***Exercise I: Communicating with mothers
during a group health discussion***

The purpose of this exercise is to give you practice at applying everything you have learnt about communicating with mothers during a group health discussion.

On page 35 there is an **example** of a nurse communicating with mothers during such a discussion. Tick the appropriate space on the "Checklist for communicating with mothers during a group health discussion" (page 32, Checklist 2) each time the nurse performs one of the actions indicated. Then answer the following questions.

1. What did the nurse do well in the group health discussion (the actions you ticked on the checklist)?

2. What could the nurse do better next time he or she conducts a group health discussion (any actions you did not tick on the checklist)?

3. Do you think the nurse made a good job of communicating with the mothers during the group health discussion? Give reasons for your opinions.

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

Example 2: A group health discussion

An auxiliary nurse at an urban health facility is responsible for having group health discussions with mothers before immunization sessions begin. On arriving at the health facility she prepares the waiting room so that the chairs form a circle. As the mothers arrive she greets them by name and asks them to sit in the chairs. She enquires about their children and other family members. A mother arrives whom she does not know. The nurse asks what her name is and spends some time talking with her. The mother's name is Sarah. She has just moved to the area and is very shy. The nurse sits down in the circle with the mothers and begins the group health discussion.

Nurse: Good morning.

Mothers: Good morning.

Nurse: Welcome, and thank you for coming. It's very good that you've brought your children to be immunized. Let me introduce Sarah, who is new here and has brought her first baby.

(The other mothers introduce themselves.)

Before the immunization session I'd like to talk with you about immunizations. I'd like to answer any questions you have about your own immunizations and those of your children. What questions do you have?

(The mothers are silent. The nurse waits a few moments to give them time to think.)

Perhaps you've got doubts about things other people have said to you. What questions have you heard from other people about immunizations?

(The nurse again pauses.)

María: My neighbour only brought her child once to be immunized. She said I didn't need to come to the health centre today.

Nurse: Your neighbour thought you didn't need to bring your child to be immunized today?

María: She said that children only need to be immunized once. But I thought you told me to come back today. How many times do I have to bring my child to be immunized?

- Nurse: You did the right thing in coming here today, María. So, you're concerned because your neighbour thought you didn't need to come, and you want to know how many times you need to bring your child to be immunized. Does anyone else have questions about this?
- Elena: Yes. I seem to have to make such a lot of visits to the health centre, and each one takes a long time. My husband gets angry if I don't have his dinner ready when he gets home from work.
- Nurse: Elena has problems in bringing her child to the health centre to be immunized so frequently. I'm sure we all know how it feels when our husbands aren't happy with us. Elena, you did the right thing in bringing your child to be immunized. Does anyone else have anything to say about how many immunizations their children need?
- Gabriela: Why do children need so many immunizations? It seems as if just one should be enough.
- Nurse: Gabriela also wants to know more about this.
- How many times do your children need to come for immunizations? Let's go round the circle. Elena, would you like to start?
- Elena: I wish it were only one - then my husband wouldn't be so upset!
- María: I think it's three.
- Gabriela: I do as well, but I'm not sure.
- Sarah: I don't know.
- Yolanda: I think it's five. That's what happened with my first baby.
- Nurse: Well, you've all done the right thing in bringing your children to the health centre today.
- And Yolanda is right. Your babies need five visits to the health centre to complete the immunization series.
- Now, Gabriela asked a good question. Why do children need so many immunizations? Why isn't one enough? Does anyone have any ideas?
- Yolanda: Last year you said it's like building a house. You have to put up all the walls and the roof to finish it. Then your family is completely protected.

Nurse: That's right. When you build a house you have to put up all the walls and the roof. Then your house is complete and your family is totally protected. But if one of the walls is missing the house will fall down. Your family won't be protected.

Your child needs all the immunizations in order to be totally protected from illnesses like measles, whooping cough and polio. If you don't give all the immunizations the series won't be complete.

So you have to bring your children to the health centre five times. Let's look at each child's immunization card.

(The mothers give their children's immunization cards to the nurse.)

I see that Gabriela's baby is here for the third time. How many more times will Gabriela need to bring him?

Mothers: Two.

Nurse: That's right.

This is María's second visit to have her baby immunized. How many more times does she need to bring him?

Mothers: Three.

Nurse: Good.

This is Sarah's first visit. How many more times does she need to bring her baby back?

Mothers: Four.

Nurse: That's right.

How about Elena? This is her fourth visit to have her baby immunized. How many more times does she need to come back with her baby?

Mothers: One.

Nurse: Correct.

Finally, let's look at Yolanda's card. This is her baby's fifth visit for immunization. How many times does she need to bring her baby back?

Mothers: None.

Nurse: That's right. Yolanda's child doesn't have to be immunized again until it's time for him to go to school. I can see you've learnt a lot about immunization. Are there any other questions?

Elena: The last time my baby got her shot she became very sick. I almost didn't bring her this time because I was worried that she might be sick again. What should I do if the same thing happens this time?

Nurse: I'm sorry your baby was sick. That must have upset you a lot.

Elena's baby had a reaction to her last shot. That's quite normal. The reaction is always much lighter than the disease. Think how sick the baby would be if she got measles.

Tell us more about what happened when she was sick.

Elena: She got a fever and cried most of the night. My mother-in-law advised me to give her tea, but this didn't reduce the fever much.

Nurse: You did well to give her tea. It's always good to give babies lots of liquids when they have a fever. Next time, give her tea again and also paracetamol to bring down the fever. You should crush a quarter of a tablet and mix it with a little water. You can also put cool towels on her forehead. What problems are you likely to have in doing this?

Elena: I don't think I'll have any.

Nurse: Let's see what you've learnt today. What will you do if your child has a fever when you go home this evening? Sarah, would you like to explain?

Sarah: I'll give him paracetamol to lower the fever.

Nurse: That's right. María, how will you give the paracetamol?

María: I'll crush a quarter of a tablet, mix it with a little water, and get her to drink it.

Nurse: Good, let's all say it together.

Mothers: Give a quarter of a tablet of paracetamol.

Nurse: Gabriela, what else can you do if your child has a fever this evening?

Gabriela: Put cool cloths on her forehead.

Nurse: Very good. Let's all repeat that with Gabriela.

Mothers: Put cool cloths on her forehead.

Nurse: Does anyone else have a question about immunizations?

(The nurse waits for a few moments.)

All right, now let's talk about your babies' next immunizations. You should all come back to this health centre because this is where your children's records are kept. The health centre is open from 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon.

Today is Monday, May 4th. Gabriela and María should return in one month, on Monday, June 1st. What problems are you likely to have about returning then?

Gabriela and María: I don't think I'll have any problems.

Gabriela: María, let's come to the health centre together. That would make it more fun.

Nurse: That's a good idea, Gabriela.

Sarah, you need to bring your baby back in six weeks, on Monday, June 15th. What problems are you likely to have with that?

Sarah: I don't think I'll have any.

Nurse: Elena, you need to come back for your baby's last immunization when she's nine months old. This last immunization is very important because it protects her from measles. What problems are you likely to have about bringing her back then?

Elena: We'll definitely be here.

Nurse: Very good. You're making a good job of taking care of your baby.

Now, Yolanda doesn't need to return for any more immunizations until her child is much older. She's done well. Let's give her a round of applause.

(The nurse and the mothers clap.)

So, let's see what we've decided. Gabriela and María, when will you bring your babies back for their next immunizations?

Gabriela and María: On June 1st.

Nurse: What day of the week is that?

Gabriela and María: Monday.

Nurse: That's right. Sarah, when will you bring your baby back?

Sarah: On Monday, June 15th.

Nurse: Very good. Elena, when is the next time you should have your baby immunized?

Elena: When she's nine months old.

Nurse: Right. Finally, where should you all come for your children's immunizations?

Mothers: To this health centre.

Nurse: That's right. What time is it open?

Mothers: From 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon.

Nurse: Very good. Make sure you bring your children's immunization cards.

Now, women need immunizations too. Who can tell me something about that?

Yolanda: Women need immunizations against lockjaw. We pass the protection to our babies when we're pregnant.

Nurse: Very good, Yolanda. Women need immunizations against lockjaw to protect both themselves and their babies. Who knows how many lockjaw immunizations a mother needs in order to be fully protected?

Yolanda: Five.

Nurse: That's exactly right. Women need five immunizations to be fully protected against lockjaw. Let's look at your cards to see how many immunizations you need.

(All the mothers except Sarah hand their immunization cards to the nurse.)

Sarah: I only have an immunization card for my baby.

Nurse: Don't worry, Sarah. You're new to this health centre and so you don't have an immunization card yet. We'll prepare one for you while you're here.

We said that women need five immunizations to be fully immunized against lockjaw. Today will be Sarah's first immunization. How many times will she need to return?

Mothers: Four.

Nurse: Correct. Gabriela, María and Elena get their second immunizations against lockjaw today. How many more times will they need to be immunized?

Mothers: Three.

Nurse: Very good. Yolanda has had three immunizations for lockjaw. Tat's excellent. How many more immunizations does she need?

Mothers: Two.

Nurse: That's right.

You should all come back to this health centre to receive your imunizations. Will any of you have any problems about doing that?

Mothers: No, I don't think so.

Nurse: Very good. And as I've mentioned, the health centre is open from 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon.

Now let's decide exactly when each one of you needs to come back for her next immunization. Sarah, you'll need your second immunization in about four weeks, so we can immunize you when you bring your baby on June 15th.

María, Gabriela and Elena: you'll need your third immunizations in about six months, that's in November. What problems are you likely to have about coming to the health centre then?

María, Gabriela
and Elena:

I don't think I'll have any.

Nurse: Very good. If you do have problems, please let me know the next time you bring your children to be immunized and we'll decide what to do.

Yolanda, your fourth immunization will be due in about a year, so you'll need to come back next May. Please keep that in mind and let me know if there are any problems about returning then.

Do any of you have any questions about women's immunizations?

Sarah: Until today I'd never heard that women needed immunizations. I feel upset that I didn't know anything about this.

Nurse: There's no need to be upset, Sarah. Today we're going to prepare an immunization card for you and get you started on your immunizations. Do you have any questions about women's immunizations?

Sarah: No, I don't think so.

Nurse: Well, be sure to ask me or another staff member if you think of a question while you're here this morning or any time you come to the health centre.

Now, we've talked about a lot of important things today. Let's summarize what you've learnt.

Elena, how many visits to the health centre does a child need in order to be completely protected?

Elena: Five.

Nurse: Good. Yolanda, what will you do if your child has a reaction to the shot?

Yolanda: I'll give her a quarter of a tablet of paracetamol and put cool cloths on her forehead to lower the fever.

Nurse: That's right. Elena, what else will you do if your child has a reaction?

Elena: I'll continue breast-feeding and give lots of other liquids.

Nurse: Excellent. Sarah, how many immunizations against lockjaw does a woman need to be fully protected?

Sarah: Five.

Nurse: Very good. When will you get your next immunization against lockjaw?

Sarah: When I bring my baby to be immunized in June.

- Nurse: That's right. María, Elena and Gabriela: how about you?
- Gabriela, María and Elena: In November.
- Nurse: Very good. Yolanda, when do you need to return for your next immunization?
- Yolanda: In May of next year.
- Nurse: That's right. And where should all of you come to have your children immunized and to be immunized yourselves?
- Mothers: To this health centre.
- Nurse: Correct. What time is the health centre open for immunizations?
- Mothers: From 8 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon.
- Nurse: That's exactly right. I can see you've all learnt a lot. I want to thank you again for coming here. I'd like to ask you to share what you've learnt with your husbands, other family members and friends. It takes a whole village to rear a healthy baby!



Exercise J: Role play - Communicating with mothers during a group health discussion

In this exercise you will practise all the skills you have learnt for communicating with mothers during a group health discussion.

Your facilitator will organize the role play and assign the roles. After the role play there will be a group discussion.

Role play situation: the participants are divided into groups of six or seven:

- One person in each group plays the role of health worker. He or she practises communicating the five pieces of essential information, using all the skills learnt for this purpose.
- One person in each group is an observer. He or she ticks all the actions on the "Checklist for communicating with mothers during a group health discussion" (pages 31) which the "health worker" is seen to perform.
- The rest of the people in the group act as mothers. The "mothers" try to behave as real mothers would during a group health discussion, and decide on:
 - The numbers of children in their imaginary families.
 - The ages of their children.
 - The numbers of immunizations their children have had.
 - Their knowledge of, and what they have done about, tetanus toxoid immunizations.

After the role play the observer gives feedback to the "health worker" on how well he or she conducted the group health discussion.

First, the health worker is praised for what he or she does well (the **specific actions** that the observer notes during the role play).

Second, the health worker is advised about what he or she should do better next time (the **specific actions** that the observer does not see during the role play and does not tick on the checklist).

Remember to be very positive in both praise and advice. The "health worker" should note down which specific actions were performed well and which ones need to be improved the next time he or she practises communicating with mothers during a group health discussion.

The roles should be exchanged until everyone has played that of health worker.

Tell your facilitator when you are ready to begin the role play.

3.3 Communicating with mothers at your health facility

You should practise communicating the essential pieces of information and using the basic skills with mothers as soon as you return to your health facility.

3.3.1 For immunization sessions

Read the checklist for communicating with mothers during an immunization session (page 24) before and after each immunization session and note which actions you performed and which ones you forgot. You may wish to put the checklist on your desk or convert it into a poster for your wall. When you have practised several times you should ask your supervisor or another person at your health facility to observe you communicating with mothers during immunization sessions and to give you feedback.

3.3.2 For group health discussions

Read the "Checklist for communicating with mothers during a group health discussion" (page 32) before you begin each discussion in order to remind yourself of the actions you need to perform. Read it again after each discussion and mark down which actions you performed and which ones you forgot. Write down what you did well and what you need to do better. When you have practised several times you should ask your supervisor or another person at your health facility to observe you conducting a group health discussion and to give you feedback.

The following exercise will help you to decide how to apply what you have learnt as soon as you return home. If your supervisor is available, do it in collaboration with her or him.



Exercise K: Communicating with mothers at your health facility

Write down answers to the following questions:

1. How will you apply what you have learnt from this module when you return home?

During immunization sessions:

During group health discussions:

2. What support and assistance do you need from other health facility staff or your supervisor in order to do this?

Tell your facilitator when you are ready for individual feedback.

Annex 1:

Points to remember

Remember this when you are communicating with mothers about immunizations. Give the mothers five essential pieces of information:

- Date and time of the next immunization.
- Place of the next immunization.
- Number of visits to the health facility their children need in order to be fully immunized.
- What side-effects may occur.
- What to do in case of side-effects.

To communicate this information:

- Ask questions about the mothers' knowledge and experience.
- Reflect back and acknowledge what the mothers have said.
- Praise and encourage the mothers' helpful practices.
- Advise the mothers what else to do and why.
- Check the mothers' understanding of what you have advised.

Annex 2:

WHO-recommended immunization schedules and policy

1. Immunization schedules

Childhood immunization schedule		
Contact	Age of child	Vaccines
1	At birth	BCG and OPV
2	6 weeks	DPT and OPV
3	10 weeks	DPT and OPV
4	14 weeks	DPT and OPV
5	9 months	Measles

Tetanus toxoid immunization for women of childbearing age	
Dose	When to give
TT1	At first contact or as early as possible during pregnancy (including the first trimester)
TT2	At least 4 weeks after TT1
TT3	At least 6 months after TT2
TT4	At least 1 year after TT3
TT5	At least 1 year after TT4

2. Policy considerations

A. Contraindications

The only contraindications for immunizing a child or woman are clinical AIDS, severe reaction in a child to a previous dose of DPT, or current admission of a child to hospital.

B. Screening women and children for immunizations

Health workers should screen all women and children for immunizations during every contact at a health facility. Screening should not be restricted to scheduled immunization days.

C. Opening vials

D. Treatment of reactions

If a child has a reaction to immunization the mother should breast-feed with increased frequency to ensure that the child receives enough fluids. If the child is more than 4-6 months old the mother should also give other fluids.

Annex 3:

Definitions of terms

Dialogue: A conversation between two or more people in which ideas and opinions are exchanged.

Paraphrasing: Saying in one's own words what another person has said.

Parroting: Repeating, word for word, what another person has said.

(Please note: other terms are defined in the Annex to Module 1.)