

Local leaders fight vaccine hesitancy in barbershops, hair salons

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — In an effort to get more shots in arms, the City of Memphis is looking for ways to reach more people. Vaccine hesitancy is still a problem in Tennessee.

Leaders are holding panel discussions in local barbershops and salons.

“You know what happens in a barber shop,” said Councilman JB Smiley. “People are relaxed. They remove all their barriers and are open and willing to listen in that environment.”

It’s a different approach in tackling vaccine hesitancy.

"It's just a real and raw conversation with people in the community about vaccines, whether or not they're getting vaccinated, why they're hesitant about vaccine, vaccinations," said Smiley.

According to the CDC, Tennessee ranks 43rd in the US for COVID-19 vaccination rates per capita.

#COVID19 community transmission in the U.S. is high.

As of August 26, the 7-day average of daily new cases is 142,006, 2.8% higher than the previous week, & 1,117.9% higher than the lowest average in June 2021. Get vaccinated. Learn more:

<https://t.co/iSLwhCwlZ2>. pic.twitter.com/5pd8PTD0rj

— CDC (@CDCgov) August 26, 2021

“I think a problem with where we are now, why we're so low in terms of vaccination rates, is we're not having real well conversations with people,” said Smiley.

In this 40-minute conversation, people from all walks of life shared why they got vaccinated in hopes of encouraging others.

“My father is sick,” said Smiley. “He has pre-existing conditions. He's vaccinated, and I want to spend every moment I can with my father.”

You can see the entire conversation here: