



To: **Early Learning, childcare service providers and schools
(for sharing with parents, guardians and staff)**

From: **Dr Éamonn O'Moore, Director of National Health Protection. National Health Protection Service.**

**Dr Lucy Jessop, Consultant in Public Health Medicine - National Immunisation Lead –
National Immunisation Office**

Date: 18/01/2023

RE: **NEW Flu Vaccine Walk-in Clinics for Children Aged 2-17 this week**

We would like to thank schools for supporting the dissemination of these important messages and thank students, parents and guardians and the whole school community for their efforts in following public health advice.

All children aged 2-17 can get the free flu vaccine

The nasal flu vaccine is still available in Ireland for children aged 2-17. It is given as a spray up the nose, there is no need for an injection. It is a safe, easy and pain free way to help protect children against flu this winter.

The flu vaccine will also help reduce the spread of flu to others such as siblings, parents, teachers at high risk of flu complications (e.g. pregnant or long-term health conditions) and grandparents.

Additional Flu Vaccination Clinics

The HSE has set up additional walk-in flu vaccination clinics for all children aged 2-17 years.

This is in response to rising numbers of both flu cases in children as well as the significant number of children who have been hospitalised with flu this winter and very low vaccination rates.

A number of community vaccination centres across the country are now offering walk-in flu vaccination clinics for all children aged 2-17. No appointment is necessary and the vaccine is free of charge. The full schedule of clinics is available on hse.ie/flu

The vaccine is also available from participating GPs and pharmacists. Parents can find details on pharmacies offering vaccinations in their area using the pharmacy finder tool on hse.ie/flu

The nasal spray flu vaccine is only available until Monday, 23 January. After this date, only children with medical conditions which put them at risk of serious illness from flu will be able to get a flu vaccine given as an injection.

Flu can be serious in children

Children are twice as likely to get the flu as adults. While most children who get the flu will have mild symptoms, some children can get complications such as pneumonia or bronchitis and may need to go to hospital. Children, especially younger children, are also more likely than adults to get severe complications of flu.

Flu can cause serious illness in children, and children with chronic health conditions are most at risk of severe complications of flu.

Children also carry the flu virus in their system longer than adults do. They can spread the flu virus easily to other children, like those in day-care centres and schools, and to older and vulnerable people around them. The flu vaccine will give children the best protection against flu.



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Therefore, we are encouraging parents to avail of this opportunity to vaccinate their children against flu as flu continues to spread and is likely to continue circulating further for a number of weeks.

Find out more about the free nasal flu vaccine for children at hse.ie/flu.