



TO: All Principals, for sharing with parents, guardians and staff

FROM: Dr Eamonn O'Moore, Director National Health Protection;
Dr Abigail Collins, National Clinical Lead Child Health Public Health

RE: Significant levels of Flu, Covid-19 and RSV currently circulating

DATE: 6th January 2023

Significant increase in viral infections

We have seen a very significant increase in the usual winter viral infections. This includes an increase in flu, RSV and now Covid-19. This is because we are all mixing together more.

We would like to thank you for supporting the dissemination of these important messages and thank the whole school community for their efforts in following public health advice. As schools and other activities re-open it is timely to remind the school community of the key measures outlined below.

Important messages for families and children regarding *any* infections:

1) The most important measure is to stay home if you are unwell.

Many children might have a runny nose or a slight cough in winter season. However, if a child is **feeling unwell** they should be at home. For example, they may have:

- **fever**
- **cough**, and
- **sore throat**

They should stay at home until those symptoms have finished. Children unwell with symptoms of one infection are more likely to get 'co-infected' with another infection which might make them more unwell, if they are exposed.

See <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/colds-coughs-children/>

Staying home when unwell will help prevent spread to other children, families and staff.

2) Infection, prevention and control measures

- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Keep hands clean

Many of the measures that we all got used to with Covid-19 are still important. Hygiene measures such as these should be encouraged for everyone. These measures help stop the spread of infection.

3) Vaccination

Making sure your child is up to date on all recommended vaccinations will help:

- stop your child getting an infection and

- make them less likely to be unwell if they do get an infection

Routine childhood vaccinations protect against many significant viral and bacterial infections.

More information is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/vaccines-your-child/>

Flu vaccine

Children and young people with underlying conditions, are at increased risk of severe complications from flu and are recommended the flu vaccine.

It is important that all adults and children recommended the flu vaccine receive the vaccine. Check if you are recommended the flu vaccine at [hse.ie/flu](https://www2.hse.ie/flu)

It is not too late to get your free flu vaccine.

More information is available at www2.hse.ie/conditions/flu/getting-the-vaccine/

Vaccination for Covid-19 is still available. Visit www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/children/

The most important ways to prevent the spread of all infections are making sure:

- anyone unwell stays at home
- children and adults are up to date with their recommended vaccines, including flu

4. If you are concerned about your child

If you are concerned your child may be unwell, please check <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/colds-coughs-children/> There is information on coughs, colds, fever, rashes and symptoms of concern.

Advice on when to contact your GP or go to a hospital emergency department is available at

<https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/parenting-advice/caring-for-a-child/baby-child-seriously-unwell/>

Typical symptoms of viral infections

Symptoms of viral infections typically include:

- runny or blocked nose
- mild fever
- cough
- lethargy (tiredness)

Many children with viral infections also have a generalised rash.

Most children with viral infections can safely be cared for at home.