

## Back to School Wellness Tips from Pharmacists



**IPU: 30 August 2023:** As school children get ready to return to school across the country, Ireland's pharmacists have issued some health advice for the school year ahead. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has reminded parents that pharmacies within the local community can and will provide discrete and helpful healthcare advice on a walk-in and welcoming basis.

Chair of the IPU's Employee Pharmacist Committee (EPC) Tadhg Scanlan outlined wellness tips for families getting ready for the autumn school term, "As summer draws to a close and as over one million young people are getting ready to return to school, the next few months will be busy for families and households. As we arrive at the start of the traditional coughs and colds season, it is important that parents and their children take simple steps to keep themselves as healthy as possible."

The following are some tips that the IPU is advising families to consider for the upcoming school

year:

- **Flu Vaccines:** Asking your pharmacist about the benefits of vaccination can be a good place to start. From October, flu vaccines will be readily available. Parents should consider getting the free nasal spray flu vaccine for children aged 2 to 12 years of age this autumn to boost their protection.
- **Coughing:** As the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for coughing courtesy and good hand hygiene, the IPU reminds parents and younger people when coughing to cover their nose and mouth, so as not to potentially harm and infect those around them. We also wish to reiterate to parents to pack tissues in their child's school bag and to ensure their child is aware to dispose of them immediately after use and to then wash their hands.
- **Vitamins:** The Health Service Executive (HSE) suggests that all young children aged up to four years of age can take a daily Vitamin D additive during winter from Halloween until St Patrick's Day[1]. For older children, taking multivitamins such as vitamins A, C and D, can help to sustain a normal function of a child's immune system.
- **Maintain a healthy diet:** Eating foods that contribute to a balanced and nutritional diet is imperative to a child's health. This will help to increase concentration which will help their schoolwork and homework.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Where it's safe and practical to do so, encourage your child to walk or cycle to school. This is a great way to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives.

Mr Scanlan concluded that if a child is unwell, you should avoid sending them to school. "Three years on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have learned the importance of taking collective responsibility to avoid the spread of illnesses. Parents should not send their child to school when they are showing signs of illness and should always follow suitable precautions."

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