

# Back to School Wellness Tips from Pharmacists



With over one million young people preparing to return to school over the next fortnight, Ireland's pharmacists have issued advice to parents on how to promote good health for the coming term. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has reminded everyone that their local community pharmacy is available to provide impartial healthcare advice on a walk-in basis.

Community pharmacist and IPU Vice President Ann Marie Horan provided the following tips to families, *"Back to school usually comes with a mix of excitement and nervousness, and is a busy time for most households. We are also heading into the traditional cold and flu season, which for the first time since the emergence of COVID-19, comes with minimal social distancing rules in place. There are sensible, positive and proactive steps that parents and their children can take to keep themselves as healthy as possible."*

- **Vitamins:** The HSE advises that all children aged up to four years old take a daily vitamin D supplement[1] throughout the winter. However, there are also benefits to older children taking multivitamins that include vitamins A, C and D. These can help contribute to the normal function of the child's immune system.
- **Maintain a healthy diet:** Eating a balanced and nutritional diet is essential to children's health and also supports their concentration when it comes to schoolwork and homework.
- **Cough etiquette:** We have all become more conscious of coughing and sneezing etiquette, but it is important to remind younger people to cover their nose and mouth when required. Also remember to pack some tissues in the school bag each day.
- **Flu & COVID-19 Vaccines:** For any child who has not received a COVID-19 vaccine this is strongly recommended. Flu vaccines for children will also be available from the beginning of October and are administered painlessly through a nasal spray. Ask your pharmacist about the benefits of this vaccination.

Ann Marie Horan concluded by reminding people that it is essential to avoid school when children are unwell. *"COVID-19 remains a risk, particularly for people with underlying health*

*conditions, as too does flu and other common winter ailments. As the pandemic has taught us, we all have a responsibility to reduce the spread of illnesses. When a child is sick, even if it is not COVID-19, they should not attend school until their symptoms have subsided.”*

[1] <https://www2.hse.ie/babies-children/weaning-eating/nutrition-child/vitamin-d/>