

Parents encouraged to book free children's flu vaccines this midterm



1 November 2022 Parents across Ireland are being encouraged to use this midterm break as the opportunity to book children for their free annual flu vaccine. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has said that the vaccine, which is administered via a simple nasal spray, is available at over 1,000 community pharmacies nationwide.

Community pharmacist and IPU Vice President, Ann Marie Horan said, “many people often dismiss a mild illness as ‘just a flu’. In reality, the flu is a serious and highly contagious respiratory illness. While the flu will impact most severely on the elderly, children are also more susceptible to serious complications. The World Health Organization and HSE now strongly recommend that children, who are also more likely to contract the flu, receive a winter flu vaccine.

“Flu vaccines are now free for all children aged between 2 and 17. All a parent or guardian has to do is book with their local participating pharmacy, provide their child’s PPS number and attend a quick appointment. By giving up just 15 minutes of their midterm break you are

protecting your child and entire family against the potential serious consequences of flu.”

Despite having been free of charge to children since 2020, Ms Horan has said uptake remains relatively low. “There has been a marked increase in demand for flu vaccines among adults’ year-on-year. However, for children it remains lower than expected, possibly because parents are simply not aware it is recommended, free of charge and so easily administered via a nasal spray.”

“Thankfully, levels of flu in the community were extremely low over the two years of COVID-19 regulations and social distancing rules. However, we are likely to see a return to higher levels this winter. The pandemic has taught all of us a lot about avoiding serious illness and a key lesson has been the value of vaccines, we should avail of those that are available for flu.”

In conclusion Ms Horan said, “The fact that the vaccine is available as a nasal spray means it is painless for children. Its availability in the convenience of pharmacies means it is simple and easy to access. By parents ensuring their children receive the flu vaccine they are keeping their children healthier and helping to protect the vulnerable in our communities.”