

Pharmacists urge people to come forward for first COVID-19 booster vaccine



IPU calls for extension of pharmacy-based vaccinations

The IPU has encouraged those who have not yet received their first booster vaccine after their primary vaccination course, to book an appointment in their local pharmacy. Many people have not yet received a booster vaccine despite pharmacies administering over 850,000 COVID-19 vaccines nationwide since last June.

Highlighting the role of the pharmacies in the COVID-19 vaccination programme IPU President and community pharmacist, Dermot Twomey said, "Community pharmacies have been centrally involved in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout programme. The immediate success of the pharmacy programme has demonstrated the value of our involvement. At the peak, pharmacies administered more than 85,000 vaccines a week, including to people who may have been hesitant or unable to attend mass vaccine centres. As concern grows with persistently high case numbers it is imperative that people avail of a booster vaccine dose after the completion of their primary course vaccination if they have not yet done so.

Less travel and time required for vaccines makes pharmacies an ideal location for vaccinating people, particularly those in school or third level education who may find it difficult to travel to a vaccine centre.

According to Mr Twomey, "Pharmacies across Ireland have ample capacity to administer vaccines and I encourage anyone who has not yet received their first booster vaccine to book an appointment with their local pharmacy."

He requested that members of the public do not contact their pharmacy for the second booster dose, which is for over 65s and those aged 12 or older who are immunocompromised, until approval has been granted to provide this vaccination in pharmacies, which should be announced shortly.

Mr Twomey also said that the success of pharmacy involvement in the COVID-19 vaccination campaign has shown the need to further expand pharmacy vaccination services within community pharmacy. "Pharmacy vaccination services are well received by the public and are provided to a high standard. This has been evident with both the COVID-19 vaccine and the annual flu vaccine. We are calling for pharmacists to be able to administer additional vaccines to prevent pneumococcal disease and hepatitis. Pharmacists have the capacity to expand their services and relieve pressure on GPs and other services."

Concluding Mr Twomey said, "With 78 million patient visits per year, the pharmacy sector is already the most accessed part of the health system. But there is a capacity and willingness to do far more for patients. Right now, as we approach the future of healthcare post COVID-19 we have a once in a generation chance to get things right. This must involve a meaningful

expansion of properly resourced pharmacy services including expanded vaccination services”.

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