

Pharmacists welcome expansion of Flu Vaccination programme

1 September 2020: Pharmacists have welcomed today's announcement by Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD that the flu vaccination programme will be expanded this year. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) said today's announcement shows the important role flu vaccination will play in protecting our health as we enter our first flu season while living with COVID-19.

IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin said, "The flu led to the hospitalisation of over 4,000 people in Ireland during the last flu season. That is more than were hospitalised with COVID-19, which should be a reminder of the serious nature of the illness. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, we have consistently called for a significant investment in this year's national flu vaccination campaign, to keep people safe from flu and protect our health system from its impact, so we can deal with the continuing impact of COVID-19.

"There is no doubt that expanding the programme and making the vaccine free to children, as well as everyone in an at-risk group, will save lives. Pharmacists are committed to playing our part and ensuring this expanded availability means expanded uptake nationwide. Last year there were over 1.1 million flu vaccines delivered in Ireland, which is up 60% since pharmacies were first permitted to administer the vaccine a decade ago."

Mr O'Loughlin concluded by reminding everyone to get vaccinated early; "The earlier we all get vaccinated the earlier we are protecting ourselves, our families and our entire communities. We can't yet stop COVID-19, but we have a vaccine to stop the flu, and that is everyone's responsibility."

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