

## Public Urged to Avail of Flu Vaccine in Pharmacies Nationwide



### **Minister Donnelly along with Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer visit community pharmacy to receive their winter flu vaccine**

*25 October 2022:* The 2022/3 Seasonal Flu Vaccine is now available in approximately 1,300 pharmacies nationwide. With the COVID-19 public health and social distancing restrictions in place over the previous two flu seasons, there was a lower incidence of flu circulating in the community. Pharmacists are advising that this year's flu season is likely to be harsher and advise early vaccination. Vaccination is free of charge to all those in at-risk groups, medical card holders and children aged between 2-17.

Earlier today, Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD was joined by Chief Medical Officer, Professor Breda Smyth and Chief Nursing Officer, Rachel Kenna at Boots Pharmacy, Baggot Street in Dublin as they received their winter flu vaccine.

Speaking at the occasion, Sharon Foley, Secretary General of the Irish Pharmacy Union urged people to book in for vaccinations without delay. "Influenza (the flu) is a highly infectious and potentially serious disease. While we have heard less about flu in recent years, it seems likely

that there will be a resurgent flu season due to reduced public health measures currently in place.

“The annual seasonal flu vaccine has been shown to be the best protection against flu. The most effective time to get the flu vaccine is before flu begins spreading in your community. After vaccination, it takes about two weeks for the antibodies to develop and for your protection to be maximised. Therefore, early vaccination is highly recommended, particularly for those in at-risk groups.”

“Pharmacists have been administering flu vaccines since 2011. The pharmacy profession demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic how important a role it can play in national vaccine campaigns by increasing accessibility and vaccination uptake. We were delighted to welcome Minister Donnelly along with the CMO and CNO into a pharmacy today to join the very many Irish citizens who have availed of the convenience of being vaccinated in their local pharmacy this year. Pharmacies have administered over 1.2 million vaccines under the COVID-19 and Flu programmes and pharmacists are available to offer advice or to answer queries you may have.”

Foley advised that flu vaccination is required annually. “Each flu season is different and therefore, unlike many vaccines which can provide lifelong protection, a flu vaccine is required annually. If you received a vaccine in previous years, there is no guarantee that you are protected from the strains of the virus that will hit Ireland during this year’s flu season.”

Sharon Foley concluded by urging parents to visit their local pharmacy to have their children vaccinated against the flu. “Children aged 2- 17 years are entitled to a free flu vaccine that will be administered via a nasal spray. It is simple, painless, has very few side effects and could prevent your child from becoming quite unwell and potentially spreading flu to others within your family.”





