

## Winter Vaccines Available in Pharmacies from This Week



- **Public encouraged to book early in pharmacies nationwide to get their flu and COVID-19 vaccine(s).**
- **IPU encourages parents to get their children vaccinated against influenza.**
- **198 people died last year alone from influenza related illness.**

**Sunday 1 October:** Both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines will become available in more than 850 pharmacies across the country from this week. The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) is urging people to register for a vaccination early this year, stating that the earlier you are vaccinated the earlier you are protecting yourself and the wider community.

Speaking in anticipation of the upcoming winter season, Dr Susan O' Dwyer, IPU's Head of Professional Services said, "It is important that we top up our winter protection. By protecting yourself, you are protecting those around you. Everyone should be aware that the flu

vaccination, for instance, is required annually and that there is no guarantee that you will gain any protection from previous vaccinations. Annual vaccination is important because flu viruses are constantly changing and immunity from vaccination declines over time. Equally, the protection from previous doses or a COVID-19 infection may weaken over time. Booster doses help boost your antibodies and give you good protection from becoming seriously ill or needing to go to hospital if you get COVID-19.”

“Local pharmacies will be running vaccination clinics across the country from this week. We are urging everyone to book a vaccination in their local pharmacy.”

“Each year respiratory infections, including flu, cause significant pressure on our health service. Last year 4,604 people were hospitalised, with a sizable percentage of those coming from medically vulnerable groups and the over 65 age group. 198 people died last year alone from influenza related illness. By receiving your flu and COVID-19 vaccines you can reduce your risk of complications from these infections and also help alleviate pressure on our health system.”

### **Children’s Vaccines**

This year the IPU is also urging parents to register children for the nasal flu vaccine, which is available free of charge for all children aged 2 to 12 years and for those aged 13-17 who are more at-risk of flu. “Flu is a serious respiratory infection and what many people do not realise is that it disproportionately affects children. Children are twice as likely as adults to catch the flu and in the past 10 years in Ireland, almost 5,000 children have been admitted to hospital with complications of flu. Sadly, almost 200 children have had treatment in intensive care and 40 children have died.

“Flu vaccines for children have been available free of charge for several years, but uptake has been low. Parents or children concerned about the vaccine should speak to their pharmacist who can provide advice and guidance. The nasal flu vaccine is given as a simple spray in each nostril. This is a quick and easy procedure that is not distressing for children.”

Dr O’Dwyer concluded by re-emphasising the importance of children receiving the vaccine. “Thankfully, most children who contract the flu will only develop mild symptoms. However, children with chronic health conditions are at risk of serious complications from the flu. In some cases where a child catches the flu, it can lead to pneumonia, bronchitis, and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Please do take the opportunity to avail of the flu vaccine for your child to mini these risks”.

ENDS

### **Note to Editor:**

The list of all pharmacies who have notified the HSE that they are offering flu and COVID-19 vaccination services is available at:

**<https://www2.hse.ie/services/pharmacies-flu-and-covid-vaccines/>**