



# The National Healthy Childhood Programme

## Newsletter 6: Summer 2019



### mychild.ie born on the 4th of July!

During the first week of July a new HSE media campaign was launched to introduce [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) - the new pregnancy, baby and toddler health website and books.

The campaign comprises radio and TV interviews, radio ads, social media posts and the provision of books and information packs to journalists. In addition, promotional packs with posters for health facilities and other [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) materials will be delivered to GP surgeries, maternity units and hospitals, and Directors of Public Health Nursing in the next week or so.

The [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) resources are designed to be a one-stop-shop where parents can get accurate and trusted information about pregnancy and the early years of their child's life.

The books are provided free of charge by HSE midwifery and public health nursing teams as they care for parents-to-be in pregnancy, and for parents, babies and children during early years. They can also be read online at [www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/my-pregnancy-and-my-child-books.html](http://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/my-pregnancy-and-my-child-books.html)

During the development of [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) we heard from over 4,000 parents from all walks of life. They told us they want common sense information, advice about what to do if their child has a problem, and the people and services to get in touch with for more help and support. They also told us that having all aspects of child health coming under one HSE-led umbrella would be incredibly helpful for them, and that the topics they're most interested in are breastfeeding, crying and sleep, play and bonding and health advice like immunisation and caring for a sick baby.

At the launch Paul Reid, HSE CEO said, *'I would like to thank the many doctors, public health nurses, midwives, dietitians, psychologists, parenting experts, and lots of other experts who created the content for [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) and the My Pregnancy and My Child books. This type of collaboration, along with partners at national and local level, to improve the health and wellbeing of children and their families is an important theme in the implementation of Sláintecare and the Healthy Ireland Framework.'*

The new resources were made possible through the Nurture Programme: Infant Health and Wellbeing - a partnership between the HSE, Atlantic Philanthropies, the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) and the Centre for Effective Services (CES).

We ask everyone to visit [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) and to recommend it to all the parents and parents-to-be with whom you come into contact.

Watch out for our national and regional media coverage and keep an eye on our promoted posts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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**Eithne Shortall** @eithneshortall · 3d  
I got these from @HSELive this week and they are \*brilliant\*. I have no interest in reading baby books because, having read ten pages of one, I find they just give you more stuff to worry about. These have only useful, factual information.

**Tanya Sweeney** @tanyasweeney · 4d  
Got these from @HSELive this morning and honestly they couldn't have come at a better time. All Irish parents will be getting them from here on out for free. Which is nice.

**June Shannon** @juneshannon  
Great resource from @HSELive [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) new website and books from pregnancy to 5 years being launched this morning. I got some great tips and information for my smallie in the 2-5 years book. #hsemymchild

**Saolta Group** @saoltagroup  
Great new resource launched by @HSELive today for parents and parents-to-be, [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie), check it out. Welcoming the new resource at #UHG today is mom Lisa Spellman and baby Jamie along with midwives, Sarah, Sylvia and Claire.

### Please share the news!

▶ Web: [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) ▶ Facebook: [facebook.com/HSEmychild.ie](https://facebook.com/HSEmychild.ie) ▶ Instagram: [#hsemymchild](https://instagram.com/hse_mychild) ▶ Twitter: @HSELive #hsemymchild



L-R: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Paul Reid, Sorcha NicMhathúna & Fiach, Carmel Brennan



Liam with his parents, Monica Uí Duill & Barra Duill



Karen Koster with Mabel Murtagh on Ireland AM



Claire McKenna with Dr Fiona McGuire on Ireland AM



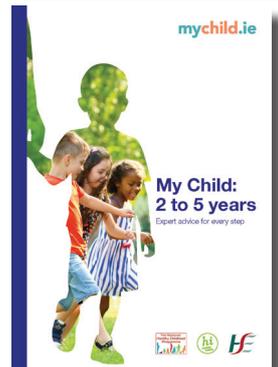
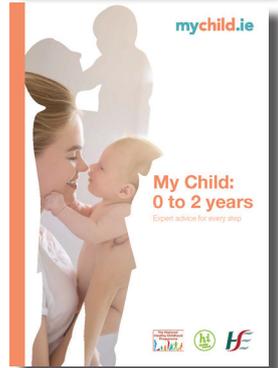
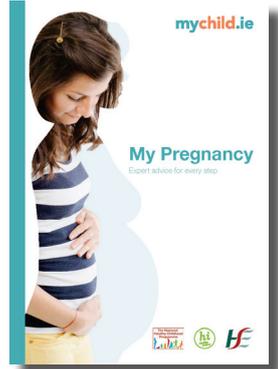


## A few facts about **mychild.ie** that you might like to share with parents and parents-to-be

These new HSE resources include a brand new child health website - [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) - and three new books, available to parents free of charge.

They contain expert advice for every step that is:

- 👣 **Evidence-based**
  - ✓ Incorporating the latest research on pregnancy, birth, child health and parenting
  - ✓ Combining this with best-practice guidelines
- 👣 **Compiled by health-care professionals**
  - ✓ Content written by GPs, public health nurses, midwives, paediatricians, obstetricians, psychologists, parenting experts, dietitians, lactation consultants and many more
  - ✓ Combining evidence-based practice with years of clinical wisdom
- 👣 **Informed by what parents want**
  - ✓ Surveys and focus groups conducted with feedback from over 4,000 parents and parents-to-be
  - ✓ Parents and parents-to-be of all ages surveyed, including those with diverse home circumstances and ethnicities
  - ✓ Comprehensive data on the health information needs of today's parents
- 👣 **Holistic, covering a broad range of topics**
  - ✓ Including health during pregnancy, labour and birth
  - ✓ Common symptoms and minor illnesses in babies and children and how to manage these at home
  - ✓ When to get medical advice from your GP or PHN
  - ✓ Nutrition, parenting, child safety, health checks and child development
- 👣 **Free for parents**
  - ✓ At [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) parents now have a wealth of evidence-informed child health information at their fingertips
  - ✓ My Pregnancy book – given free of charge to all pregnant mothers at the booking visit
  - ✓ My Child: 0 to 2 years and My Child: 2 to 5 years books – given to parents by their public health nurse



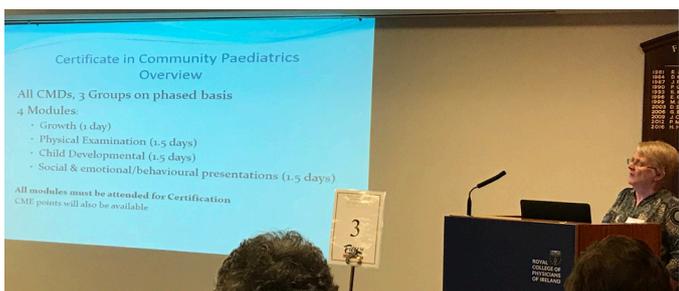
## Certificate in Community Paediatrics

A new Certificate in Community Paediatrics has been developed as a bespoke professional development programme for community medical doctors (CMDs). The programme has been developed following a training needs analysis of the specific service role of community medical doctors in delivering The National Healthy Childhood Programme. Its development and delivery is a collaboration between the HSE and RCPI and has been enabled by the Nurture Programme: Infant Health and Wellbeing.

The aim of this programme is to provide participants with enhanced knowledge and skills to support the CMD role in the provision of child health services.

It covers the conditions most likely to present in the community healthcare setting, with a particular emphasis on childhood presentations of atypical or delayed development.

The certificate is delivered in four modules over an eight month duration in the Royal College of Physicians. Certain modules will involve attendance at clinics with regional or specialist paediatric services.



Dr Kathleen O'Sullivan, PMO representative to the Nurture Programme Training and Resources Implementation Team



Attendees at the first module of the Certificate in Community Paediatrics programme



## Healthy weight for children

Recognising that obesity is a major public health challenge, a multidisciplinary Healthy Weight for Children (HWfC) working group was convened by the Health Service Executive (HSE) with representatives from The National Healthy Childhood Programme, the Healthy Eating Active Living programme, TUSLA, safefood and academia.

Using international and local evidence, this group informed and supported the development of a framework which provides strategic direction to facilitate healthy weight among children in Ireland, with a strong focus on prevention among 0-6 year olds, inclusive of the preconception and antenatal periods.

The framework is underpinned by the principle that government and society have a moral and legal responsibility to act on behalf, and in the best interests, of children in reducing the risk of obesity through protecting children's rights to health.

It presents a portfolio of recommendations under 10 defined areas for action:



Central to the process is the need for a focus on a population-level approach in prevention with a coherent, consistent and equitable process that is informed and quality assured with an inbuilt evaluation and monitoring system.

Interventions for healthy behaviours are to be targeted at critical periods in the life-course, especially during interactions with services in the healthcare, childcare, social care and education sectors. Additional supportive interventions are necessary in the areas of legislation, mass communications and social marketing, community-based interventions and supplementary targeted supports for those most in need. Leadership, governance, monitoring and evaluation are identified as crucial for successful implementation.

The *Healthy Weight for Children (0-6 years) Framework* is available to download (both in full and summary versions) from [hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/child-health-and-wellbeing/](https://hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/child-health-and-wellbeing/)

We extend a sincere thank you to all who worked so hard to bring the framework to fruition.

An abstract, *A framework document to facilitate healthy weight for children aged 0-6 years in Ireland*, submitted by Dr Phil Jennings and Dr Fionnuala Cooney for the Europaediatrics Congress 2019 was accepted for a poster presentation.

Fionnuala (pictured here) presented the poster at the Congress in Dublin recently - showcasing, on an international stage, the work that has been done.





## Implementing the Breastfeeding Action Plan

Implementing the HSE *Breastfeeding Action Plan* is one of the five core work-streams of The National Healthy Childhood Programme. The *Breastfeeding Action Plan* sets out an overall programme of work aimed at increasing breastfeeding initiation and duration rates by supporting and enabling more mothers to breastfeed. The National Breastfeeding Implementation Group is working to achieve this by:

- improving governance and health service structures
- providing new breastfeeding training and skills development
- developing health service policies and practices
- supporting all stages of the breastfeeding continuum through social marketing, support and advocacy

Two policies have recently been updated and circulated:

- *HSE Infant Feeding Policy for Primary Care Teams & Community Health Organisations* (an update of the *Breastfeeding Policy for Primary Care Teams and Community Health Organisations, 2015*)
- *HSE Infant Feeding Policy for Maternity and Neonatal Services 2019* (an update of the 2015 policy)

We've also developed a poster to accompany the policy, having consulted with midwives and lactation consultants to agree the final content and layout. The poster (pictured here) shows the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*. A supply of the posters has been sent to all maternity hospitals and units for display in patient areas of the hospital and for use as a teaching aid on the policy.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Policy Development Subgroup who reviewed and updated the policies and all those who provided feedback as part of the wide consultation process.

The policies and poster are available at [hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/child-health-and-wellbeing/breastfeeding-healthy-childhood-programme/policies-and-guidelines-breastfeeding/](http://hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/child-health-and-wellbeing/breastfeeding-healthy-childhood-programme/policies-and-guidelines-breastfeeding/)

*Thank you for your ongoing work to support and promote breastfeeding through the implementation of the HSE Breastfeeding Action Plan.*

# The TEN STEPS to Successful Breastfeeding\*

**2 Staff competency**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Training staff on supporting mothers to breastfeed  
 Assessing health workers' knowledge and skills

Well trained health workers provide the best support for breastfeeding.

**3 Antenatal care**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Discussing the importance of breastfeeding for babies and mothers  
 Preparing women in how to feed their baby

Most women are able to breastfeed with the right support.

**1 Hospital policies**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Not promoting infant formula, bottles or teats  
 Making breastfeeding care standard practice  
 Keeping track of support for breastfeeding

Hospital policies help make sure that all mother and babies receive best care, and support staff who wish to continue breastfeeding on return to work.

**4 Care right after birth**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Encouraging skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby soon after birth  
 Helping mothers to put their baby to the breast right away

Immediate, unhurried and uninterrupted skin to skin contact after birth helps breastfeeding get started.

**5 Support mothers with breastfeeding**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Checking positioning, attachment and suckling  
 Giving advice breastfeeding support  
 Helping mothers with common breastfeeding problems

Breastfeeding is natural, but many mothers need help at first.

**6 Supplementing**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Giving only breast milk unless there are medical reasons  
 Prioritizing donor human milk when a supplement is needed  
 Helping mothers who want to formula feed to do so safely

Giving formula to a breastfed baby without an indication makes it harder to get breastfeeding established.

**7 Rooming-in**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Letting mothers and babies stay together day and night  
 Making sure that mothers of sick babies can stay near their baby

Mothers need to be near their babies to recognise and respond to feeding cues.

**8 Responsive feeding**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Helping mothers know when their baby is hungry  
 Not limiting breastfeeding times  
 Encouraging mothers to hold their baby when feeding (breast or bottle) and bond  
 Supporting mothers to pace bottle feeds

Feeding babies (breast/bottle) whenever they are ready helps everybody.

**9 Bottles, teats and pacifiers**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Counsel mothers on the use and risks of feeding bottles, teats, and pacifiers

It is important that everything that goes in the baby's mouth needs to be clean.

**10 Discharge**  
 Mothers support mothers to breastfeed by:  
 Referring mothers to community resources for breastfeeding support  
 Working with community workers to improve breastfeeding support services

Learning to breastfeed takes time. More information on breastfeeding support is available on [www.mychild.ie](http://www.mychild.ie)



\*Incorporated into the HSE Infant Feeding Policy for Maternity and Neonatal Services (2018)

## Breastfeeding: A good start in life

The popular breastfeeding booklet, *A good start in life*, has been revised and updated. There is additional content and even more expert advice.

This booklet was developed by the HSE with the support of The Nurture Programme: Infant Health & Wellbeing, Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland, La Leche League, Cuidiú and Friends of Breastfeeding.

It is now available for ordering from [healthpromotion.ie](http://healthpromotion.ie).

## Share the news - breastfeeding.ie is now mychild.ie

As parents and parents-to-be told us that having all aspects of child health under one trusted, HSE-led umbrella would be helpful, it was planned from the outset to merge the HSE's [breastfeeding.ie](http://breastfeeding.ie) site with [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie).



Now that this merger has happened, parents are continuing to get all the great support and information they have always had from [breastfeeding.ie](http://breastfeeding.ie) and from our popular and effective *Ask our Breastfeeding Expert* service - plus all the wider pregnancy and child health information from the HSE, all together in one place.

The [breastfeeding.ie](http://breastfeeding.ie) address now automatically brings the user to [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie), and a new url - [mychild.ie/breastfeeding](http://mychild.ie/breastfeeding) - has been developed. We have also merged the [breastfeeding.ie](http://breastfeeding.ie) Facebook page with the new [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) Facebook page, and we believe that this offers a richer range of supports to parents-to-be and parents.

The results so far are very positive – since the site moved in early May, visits to our breastfeeding pages are up 45%, online questions to our breastfeeding experts are up 62%, live chats are up from 85% to 87%, and our social media page has seen an increase in followers and positive engagement with our breastfeeding posts.

Breastfeeding, as one of the most popular topics for parents, will feature strongly in the new and ongoing communications campaign.

A promotional campaign of €500,000 for [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) has been secured for 2019, this represents an additional €270,000 compared to the 2018 budget for [breastfeeding.ie](http://breastfeeding.ie) promotion.

We will continue to look closely at the traffic to the site to see what works for people and we will make any updates that are needed, based on feedback from services users and our colleagues.



## Child Health Programme Development Officers

As part of the implementation of The National Healthy Childhood Programme, a Child Health Programme Development Officer post was recruited for each of the nine CHOs.

Currently we have a Programme Development Officer in eight of the nine CHO areas:

CHO	Name	Contact details
CHO1	Celine Croarkin	Celine.croarkin@hse.ie
CHO2	Elizabeth Lambe	Elizabeth.lambe@hse.ie
CHO3	Brenda Mellett	Brenda.mellett@hse.ie
CHO4	Martina Giltenane	Martina.gilteneane@hse.ie
CHO5	Recruitment in progress	
CHO6	Emma Hanway	Emma.hanway@hse.ie
CHO7	Valerie Cooke	Valerie.cooke@hse.ie
CHO8	Marianne Tierney	Marianne.tierney1@hse.ie
CHO9	Maria Flaherty	Maria.flaherty1@hse.ie



L-R: Carmel Brennan, Dr. Phil Jennings, Elizabeth (Libby) Lambe (CHO 2), Maria Flaherty (CHO 9), Celine Croarkin (CHO 1), Brenda Mellett (CHO 3), Marianne Tierney (CHO 8), Martina Giltenane (CHO 4), Anne Parry. Missing from photo: Emma Hanway (CHO 6) & Valerie Cooke (CHO 7)

The role will support the implementation of The National Healthy Childhood Programme at CHO level. This will involve local level review, planning, design, implementation and communication of the agreed quality improvement changes within child health.

Post holders will work primarily within Primary Care to support a more consistent model of service delivery for all children, linking with internal and external partners to ensure a collaborative approach across all stakeholder groups.

## Remember to recommend whooping cough vaccine to pregnant women

A national outbreak of pertussis was declared in November 2018. This was due to the increase in notifications of infant pertussis cases in Ireland over the past number of years. Tragically six infant deaths occurred over this time with other babies requiring prolonged hospitalisation and intensive care treatment.

A fully funded vaccination programme for pregnant women was implemented to control the outbreak. The National Healthy Childhood Programme wishes to extend its thanks to GPs and practice nurses, whose ongoing support has been essential to the implementation of this measure.

Remember that women should be vaccinated during EACH pregnancy, even if the pregnancies are close together. The vaccine can be given between 16-36 weeks gestation, but is most effective when given in the second trimester.

Published research<sup>i</sup> and Irish data<sup>ii</sup> indicate that maternal pertussis vaccination is extraordinarily efficacious and safe.

The outbreak code for use when vaccinating pregnant women against pertussis is available from your local Department of Public Health.

- i) Amirthalingam, G., Andrews, N., Campbell, H., Ribeiro, S., Kara, E., Donegan, K., Fry, N., Miller, E. and Ramsay, M. (2014). Effectiveness of maternal pertussis vaccination in England: an observational study. *The Lancet*, 384(9953), pp.1521-1528.
- ii) Collins, A. Jennings, P et al. (n.d.). An outbreak of pertussis infection in Co. Longford and audit of implementation of the key recommendations 2017-2018. Department of Public Health, Midlands.



## Are you and your children protected against measles?

Measles can be a very unpleasant virus and can sometimes lead to serious complications, even death.

Measles is most common in children, but anyone can get measles if they have not had it before and they have:

- ✗ not been vaccinated at all against measles (unvaccinated)
- ✗ not received the correct number of vaccinations against measles (incompletely vaccinated)

The vaccine against measles is called the MMR. This is an effective and safe vaccine. All children should be vaccinated with MMR according to the [Primary Childhood Immunisation Schedule](#).

Outbreaks of measles are continuing in parts of Europe, so all people planning travel in 2019 should:

- ✓ Make sure all children travelling are up to date with their vaccines.
- ✓ Bring any children aged between 6 - 11 months of age for a dose of MMR vaccine before travel. Please note that this does NOT replace the vaccine dose at 12 months. It is important to still bring the child for their MMR at 12 months even if they received a vaccine prior to travelling.
- ✓ Check their own vaccine status and that of other adults travelling. If they have never had measles, and have not had two doses of MMR, they should attend their GP for MMR vaccine.



Vaccination against measles is the best way to protect children and adults from the complications of measles.



## www.hse.ie/childsafety has now merged with **mychild.ie**



Parents and parents-to-be have told us that having smaller, disconnected and separate websites for different HSE services is confusing and unhelpful. With this in mind we have updated, reformatted and merged the child safety content with **mychild.ie**. Among the topics covered are:

- ▶ First aid kit for babies and children
- ▶ Cuts and bleeding in children
- ▶ How to give CPR (mouth-to-mouth)
- ▶ Baby walkers, baby bouncers and baby chairs
- ▶ Car seats and child safety in cars
- ▶ Preventing falls in children
- ▶ Choking, strangulation and suffocation
- ▶ Burns and scalds
- ▶ Clothes safety for babies and children
- ▶ How to child-proof your home
- ▶ Child safety around the farm
- ▶ Cot death
- ▶ Water safety for babies and children
- ▶ Sun safety for babies and children

The previous address [hse.ie/childsafety](http://hse.ie/childsafety) now brings the user directly to [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) where they will find child safety information along with all other aspects of child health and care. Check it out and let your colleagues and the parents you meet know.

## Keeping children safe on the farm this summer

Children are naturally curious. A farm is a very tempting place for them. But a farm is a workplace.

As the summer holidays approached, the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), along with the Irish Primary Principals Network, highlighted the safety of children on farms. They stressed that summer brings a high risk of children being involved in farm accidents. This is because children spend more time at home on their family farm or visiting others during the summer holidays and this time coincides with an increase of activity on many farms.

The HSA highlighted the heartbreaking fact that 21 children have lost their lives in the last decade as a result of farm accidents. They have starkly stated that *“farms are the only workplace in Ireland where children still continue to die”*, adding that *“farm deaths involving children are always a horrific tragedy for families, and heart-breaking for communities and schools alike.”* You can read more on this at [agriland.ie](http://agriland.ie)



The **HSE Child Safety Programme** advises:

- ▶ Children should never be allowed onto a farmyard unless they are closely supervised by an adult.
- ▶ It's not possible to safely look after a child and work on the farm at the same time.
- ▶ Any visitors or contractors on the farm should be told if there are children nearby.
- ▶ Children need to have a safe, fenced-off area to play that is in view of the home.
- ▶ It is important to talk to children about safety on the farm - tell them about the dangers and set the rules. This also applies to children who are visiting your farm.
- ▶ Don't expect a child to take on the responsibility of keeping themselves safe - that is our responsibility as adults. **Children do not understand danger.**

Visit [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) for lots of child safety around the farm advice.

## Is it just an old wives' tale?

Old adages around pregnancy abound, from gender prediction to inducing labour. But is there truth to be found in any of these snippets of ancient wisdom and folklore? For instance, is there any truth in the old wives' tale that pregnant women who give birth to a baby with lots of hair tend to experience more heartburn?

Heartburn is an unpleasant pregnancy symptom experienced by 17-45% of pregnant women<sup>1</sup>. While it doesn't usually cause complications, it can be associated with severe nausea and vomiting.

Surprisingly (!) there is very little published data examining the association between this annoying symptom and the amount of hair present on the baby's cranium. However, in 2006, researchers at John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore undertook to investigate this commonly-held belief<sup>2</sup>. During this cutting-edge study, they followed up 64 pregnant women. They asked them to rank the severity of their heartburn during the pregnancy. Independent coders ranked the hair volume of the newborn babies using photographs.

Interestingly, this research found a statistically significant linear relationship between newborn hair volume and maternal heartburn severity. This led the researchers to postulate that the pregnancy hormones that relax the lower oesophageal sphincter might also modulate foetal hair growth. Whether these results are reproducible remains to be seen. But one thing is for sure, after the birth, for most women their heartburn is 'hair today, gone tomorrow!'

i) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4562453/>

ii) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17150070>



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