

**Oifig Náisiúnta Imdhionta**

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e immunisation@hse.ie**September 2023****Primary and Second Level Vaccination Programmes 2023/2024**

Dear Representative of Joint Management Bodies,

The HSE greatly appreciates the on-going co-operation of Boards of Management and staff of schools in the implementation of the HSE's Schools Immunisation Programme to protect children from serious infectious diseases.

I am writing to share an update from the HSE about the School Immunisation Programmes delivered in Junior Infants and Senior Infants of primary schools and First year of second level schools (and age equivalent who are attending special schools) for the 2023/2024 academic year.

We acknowledge that schools have faced significant challenges since the emergence of COVID-19, however I am writing to request your support for the return to school premises based delivery of vaccination programmes. An instruction to your members to work with the HSE school teams to find solutions to ensure students can be vaccinated on site would be greatly appreciated.

Research from all over the world shows that offering school aged vaccines on school premises delivers higher uptake than vaccines delivered off site. Now that society is opened and travel has resumed children will be more at risk of coming into contact with vaccine preventable diseases or missing opportunities to get vaccinated. Children developing vaccine preventable diseases could also negatively impact teachers who are pregnant or have weak immune systems.

We would be grateful if schools could continue to distribute the HSE vaccine information packs to students. Having completed consent forms available allows the HSE school teams to plan immunisation sessions in advance.

Programme information is available from www.immunisation.ie and www.hpv.ie should you require additional information.

Programme Updates**School Class Lists**

The HSE is currently working with colleagues from the Department of Education on data sharing of class lists. The purpose of this project is to enable the Schools Immunisation System to be able to associate children with particular classes in schools with the aim of improving data quality and vaccine uptake.

Junior Infants

The routine booster dose of 4 in 1 (diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), polio and tetanus) vaccine and a second dose of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine will continue for pupils in Junior Infants.

These vaccines will be offered by HSE vaccination teams in primary schools in all parts of the country except Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim where they are given by general practitioners in their surgeries.

Due to concerns about the increase in cases of measles in Europe, school teams plan to deliver MMR and 4 in 1 in the autumn term as much as possible.



Senior Infants- Flu Vaccine

This year the nasal flu vaccine (LAIV) will be offered by HSE vaccination teams to senior infants in mainstream primary schools and all children in primary-age special schools across the country between October and Mid-December. If we do not get a chance to visit your school this season, the vaccine will also be available for children through their local GP or pharmacy.

The seasonal flu programme launches in October and more information will be available on www.hse.ie/flu before the programme launches.

First Year

The HPV (Human Papillomavirus), Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis) and MenACWY (Meningococcal disease) vaccines will continue for all pupils in first year.

These vaccines will be offered by HSE vaccination teams in second level schools in all parts of the country.

Now that only one dose of HPV vaccine is required for protection, it is possible to offer all vaccines at the same visit and to allow the change in time for the junior infant vaccine programme, the second level vaccines will in the main start in the Spring term.

Supporting people who are Refugees and Applicants Seeking Protection

School teams will have access to translated materials for students in Junior Infants and First Year for the 2023/2024 academic year for those who require them. We would encourage schools to work with vaccination teams to ensure sufficient copies of translated materials are available to support students eligible for vaccination.

Laura Brennan HPV Catch Up Vaccination Programme

This year the HSE is offering an opportunity to students from 2nd – 6th year and females aged 24 years or younger and males 21 years or younger who did not get their HPV vaccine before to get vaccinated.

The programme is being delivered by the HSE in HSE vaccination clinics. The vaccine and its administration are available for free.

Programme details, including a link to book an appointment are available from www.hpv.ie

Once again thank you for your support of the schools immunisation programme.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lucy Jessop', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Dr Lucy Jessop
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