



Príomhoifigeach Cliniciúil
Oifig an Phríomhoifigigh Cliniciúil

Ospidéal Dr Steevens, Lána Steevens
Baile Átha Cliath 8, D08 W2A8

Chief Clinical Officer
Office of the Chief Clinical Officer

Dr Steevens Hospital, Steevens Lane
Dublin 8, D08 W2A8

www.hse.ie
[@hselive](https://twitter.com/hselive)

t 01 635 2000
e cco@hse.ie

By Email Only

To: All General Practitioners

From: Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE.

Date: January 2nd, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

As 2024 starts, we face increasing and concerning pressures across the whole healthcare system as a result of a surge in activity of influenza and COVID-19, along with the lingering impact of RSV. Most recent data from the HPSC reveals a steep rise in cases detected and in those presenting to Emergency Departments for both influenza and COVID-19, the latter driven by the emergence of the JN.1 variant which is more transmissible and has a growth advantage over previous variants. While activity is increasing everywhere as a result, the risks for patients are felt most acutely in Emergency Departments where illness is most concentrated. We know also, with increasing activity of these viruses, that hospitals face increasing threat of outbreaks with all the disruption that follows for patients, staff and services. Our hospitals and community healthcare services have been working hard with our General Practice colleagues and other partners in the run-up to Christmas and over the whole holiday period. This year has seen particular focus on creating as much capacity as possible within hospitals in advance of Christmas and in harnessing alternatives to hospital admission, facilitating timely discharge for those admitted and in using all available capacity outside hospitals to maintain flow of patients through and out of hospitals. The coming weeks will see further increase in influenza and COVID-19 activity and, even after cases peak, pressures are likely to remain significant for many weeks after.

Today, January 2nd, will likely see a further surge of patients presenting to Primary Care, often driven by patients who held back presenting to General Practice until after Christmas. While this creates significant additional pressure for you and your colleagues, it is important that you consider alternative and suitable facilities should you wish to refer patients onwards for further opinion and care. These include:

- Local Injury Units
- Medical Assessment Units in Model II hospitals
- Private alternatives where available
- Community access to imaging
- Full range of HSE community services and supports are also available.

Míle buíochas as ucht bhur saothar agus bhur gcomhoibriú i gcaitheamh na bliana seo thart agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh uilig.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Colm Henry
Chief Clinical Officer
HSE