



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Public Health Department  
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Dear Principal,

At this time of year we tend to see increases in certain illnesses in our communities such as influenza and winter vomiting bug/norovirus. These illnesses can spread easily from person to person.

### Influenza like illness

Flu or influenza like illness usually causes **rapid onset of fever** (temperature over 38 degrees celsius) and cough or sore throat. Other symptoms can include runny or stuffy nose, limb or joint pain or headache. For further information: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/influenza/seasonalinfluenza/guidance/schoolsguidance/>

It is important if a child or staff member has symptoms of influenza like illness that he/she stays at **home for at least 5 days** after the symptoms begin to prevent the spread of illness to others.

Good hand hygiene is important for all students and their household members to prevent the spread of illness. People should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue immediately in the bin. If no tissue is available they should cough or sneeze into the inside of their elbow. Hard surfaces such as kitchen worktops, door handles, should be washed frequently with a normal household cleaner. There are useful posters available online which could be displayed in your school to promote good respiratory and hand hygiene: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/influenza/seasonalinfluenza/infectioncontroladvice/respiratoryhygieneposters/>

People with underlying health conditions are at higher risk of complications from flu like illness should be vaccinated each year. Vaccination is strongly recommended for:

- Adults and children aged 6 months and older with a long-term health condition such as:
  - Chronic respiratory disease - including moderate or severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cystic fibrosis,
  - Diabetes mellitus
  - Chronic heart disease,
  - Chronic liver disease,
  - Chronic renal failure,
  - Cancer patients
  - Chronic neurological disease
- People with Down syndrome
- Persons aged 65 and over
- Pregnant women (vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy)
- Haemoglobinopathies
- Immunosuppression due to disease or treatment, including asplenia or

- splenic dysfunction and cancer patients
- Children aged 6 months and older:
  - with moderate to severe neurodevelopmental disorders such as cerebral palsy and intellectual disability,
- on long-term aspirin therapy
- Residents of nursing homes and other long stay institutions
- Healthcare workers including all GP practice staff

For further information on influenza: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/influenza/seasonalinfluenza/guidance/schoolsguidance/Flu%20information%20for%20parents.pdf>

### **Winter Vomiting Bug/ Norovirus:**

The winter vomiting bug spreads very easily from person to person. The symptoms can include: nausea (often sudden onset), Vomiting (often projectile), Crampy abdominal pain, Watery diarrhoea, high temperature chills and muscle aches. The illness is usually brief, with symptoms lasting only about 1-2 days.

It is extremely important that people who have been ill with vomiting or diarrhoea should **remain off school or work while symptomatic and for two full days after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.**

Frequent hand washing including before eating or preparing food and after toilet use is important to reduce the spread of illness. Cleaning and disinfecting contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of vomiting or diarrhoea by using bleach-based household cleaner is important in preventing the spread of illness.

For further information please see: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/lifestages/schoolhealth/File,14304,en.pdf>

Yours Sincerely

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