



TO: All principals, for sharing with parents, guardians and staff

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RE: Advice for parents to help your child's health this school year

DATE: 9 October 2025

Advice for parents to help your child's health this school year

With the school year underway, the following advice may be helpful over the coming months to support your child.

For example, your child may be feeling worried or anxious about going to school. As the school year progresses, most children will end up picking up common viral infectious illnesses such as colds. You can find tips on dealing with these types of situations below.

1. Ease anxieties and worries

Check in with your child about how they are feeling about school.

If your child seems anxious, take time to listen. Let them know their feelings are valid. It helps to say something like, "I can see why you're feeling worried". Reassure them that we all feel anxious at times, there are ways to help and people to talk to such as your parent or teacher.

Remind them of times they've faced fears before and come through it. Reading books about school and trying to have some extra one-on-one time with a child who is struggling can all help too.

If things don't improve, your child is constantly anxious, it's starting to affect their daily life, or they're struggling at school or with friends, it's a good idea to talk to your school or GP for advice.

2. When your child is unwell

When children miss school, they miss learning as well as valuable moments with friends and teachers. Attending school is important to a child's wellbeing, social development, learning and their future. Information and support to help improve attendance is available at gov.ie/schoolattendance.

Your child can usually attend school if they are feeling generally well, even if they have any or all of the following symptoms:

- minor cough
- runny nose
- mild sore throat

However, a child should not go to school if they are **unwell**.

For example, keep your child at home if they have:

- a fever (a temperature of 38 degrees higher)
- diarrhoea or vomiting
- a combination of symptoms which is making them clearly unwell.

They should stay at home until they are feeling well and their symptoms are substantially better. Children unwell with symptoms of one infection are more likely to get infected with another infection too, which might make them more unwell. Staying home when unwell will help prevent the spread of viruses to other children, families and staff.

You can find advice in a guide on the HSE's mychild.ie - [‘Knowing if your child is well enough to go to school or childcare’](#).

There is also a useful graphic which tells you how long children should stay home across a number of different illnesses – [‘HPSC: When your child should return to school’](#).

Prepare in advance for how you would manage if your child has to stay at home. Check to see if you have essentials such as children's paracetamol, ibuprofen and a thermometer.

3. Remind kids of the basics

- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Keep hands clean

Remind your child how to wash their hands and cover coughs and sneezes. These simple but important practices make a huge difference in helping to stop the spread of infection.

This helps protect more vulnerable people at home and at school, including newborn babies, those who are pregnant or immunocompromised.

Pack some tissues in your child's school bag and make sure they know to throw used ones in the bin.

4. Upcoming checks and vaccines

When your child starts school, they will be offered vision and hearing screening in junior infants as part of the [HSE's school health programme](#).

These screenings help to identify any potential issues with your child's vision or hearing early. The screening is carried out at school by a public health nurse. Your child will bring a consent form home in their school bag for you to fill out beforehand.

Vaccination

Making sure your child is up to date on all recommended vaccinations helps to:

- stop your child getting the infection they are vaccinated against, and
- make them less likely to be unwell if they do get an infection.

Junior infants and first year secondary school students are offered vaccination at school to protect them against serious illnesses. Check your child's school bag for their school immunisation consent pack and return the signed form to the school as soon as possible.

Routine childhood vaccinations protect against many significant viral and bacterial infections. Contact your GP if your child missed out on any of the routine childhood vaccines which take place in 5 visits from age 2 months to 13 months. Find out more about childhood vaccinations on our [website](#).

Measles

With measles cases and outbreaks reported in many European countries where children may have been on summer holidays, measles really is important to think about.

Two doses of the [measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\) vaccine](#) are needed for the best protection – the first is usually given at 12 months of age and the second when your child is at junior infants stage. Catch-up vaccines are available from participating GPs if your child is older than junior infants and has not received two doses of MMR vaccine.

Children's nasal spray flu vaccine

Young children, in particular, are more likely than adults to get very sick from flu. This is why all children aged 2 to 17 years can get a [free nasal spray flu vaccine](#) this autumn. It's a safe and effective way to protect them and the rest of your family too.

Children with underlying health conditions, including a weak immune system, are recommended to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

You can get further information from your GP or pharmacist or go to hse.ie/flu for information on how to get the children's flu vaccine.

5. Know your local care options

It can be hard to know when you should go to your GP or go straight to the hospital emergency department (ED). Advice on when to contact your GP or go to a hospital ED is available on our [website](#).

Find your local urgent and emergency care options by searching the [HSE service finder](#).

Make a note of your local GP out-of-hours phone number, emergency department and injury unit somewhere handy so you know where to go if ever needed.

For more health advice, visit mychild.ie and listen back to the HSE Talking Health and Wellbeing podcast [back to school podcast](#) (episode 65) with Dr Abigail Collins for more tips. The HSE Talking Health and Wellbeing Podcast is available wherever you get your podcasts and on the [HSE Health and Wellbeing YouTube channel](#).