Department of Public Health North East / HSE

27th October 2021

A Chara,

As Director of Public Health in the HSE North East Department of Public Health, covering the four counties of Cavan, Monaghan, Louth & Meath, I am reaching out to each of you in the Public Participation Networks to ask for your support and feedback in our efforts to increase COVID-19 vaccination uptake rates in your community.

The national COVID-19 case numbers are rising yet again and our Department has seen a significant increase in the North East counties during the past week. We have also noticed that the vaccination uptake rates in many of the Local Electoral Areas (LEAs) within our four counties are lower than the national average. Please see table in appendix for current uptake rates.

COVID-19 vaccination is a safe and effective measure we can all take in order to protect ourselves and others from severe infection, hospitalisation, and even death. The HSE North East Department of Public Health, Community Health, Social Inclusion, and the four County Councils are urging people, to come forward to receive their COVID-19 vaccine, in an effort to improve vaccination uptake in the region.

The North East Department of Public Health is working on a number of strategies to improve COVID-19 vaccination uptake rates in the region. In addition to the media campaigns, examples of initiatives undertaken so far in our region include: providing information sessions in a range of workplaces and Direct Provision Centres, providing signposts to translated information in 38 different languages, targeted social media campaigns, pop-up vaccination centres and dedicated vaccination clinics for hard to reach communities.

There are links attached to this letter with information in different formats about COVID-19 vaccination. I encourage you to use them to give people accurate information and to promote vaccination uptake.

We understand that people have many different reasons for not yet availing of the COVID-19 vaccine. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with your community members, to provide them with a clear authoritative source of information about vaccines and to offer them a forum where they can ask questions, so that we can understand their concerns and address them. I would be grateful if you could let us know if this would be beneficial and feasible.

In addition, if any of your community members would like to support us in this work by being a "Vaccine Champion" – someone who would be happy to discuss their experiences with getting the vaccine and why they think it is important, we would be delighted to assist them in getting their message out.

We would really appreciate any support you have to offer, and look forward to hearing your feedback. If you have any questions in relation to the vaccines or in relation to the proposed engagement, please email the Department of Public Health HSE North East – dph.ne@hse.ie.

Information on the COVID-19 Vaccine:

COVID-19 vaccine resources and information have been translated into 38 different languages. To access translated COVID-19 information, visit: https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/covid-19-resources-and-translations/translated-covid19-information/

COVID-19 vaccines are widely available at various locations across the region, including participating pharmacies. We enclose a poster highlighting where you can get a COVID-19 vaccine, which you might find useful to share with community members.

In addition, updates on walk-in vaccination clinics and more information about COVID-19 vaccines are available. For more information about:
- Participating pharmacies, visit:
  https://www2.hse.ie/apps/services/pharmaciesservicelist.aspx
- Walk-in COVID-19 vaccination clinics, visit: https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/find-a-covid-19-vaccination-centre/

We know that COVID-19 vaccines save lives. We also understand that vaccines require trust, transparency and accountability. We are committed to making sure you feel safe and supported.
If you have a question about COVID-19 vaccines, we are here to help.
You can contact your doctor, pharmacist or call HSELive: Freephone 1800 700 700 or 01 240 8787 - open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Sunday or tweet:@HSELive.

Together, we can turn the tide against COVID-19 and build a stronger, healthier future.

Dr Augustine Pereira
Director of Public Health,
HSE North East

Appendix 1: Vaccination rate by Local Electoral Authority (LEA)

LEA ID	LEA_NAME	Decile	Vaccine rate decile range (%)
1.3E+07	Ardee Lea-6	3	83.6% to 86.0%
1.3E+07	Ashbourne Lea-6	4	86.0% to 87.8%
1320401	Bailieborough - Cootehill Lea-6	4	86.0% to 87.8%
1.3E+07	Ballybay-Clones Lea-5	2	80.4% to 83.6%
1320402	Ballyjamesduff Lea-6	4	86.0% to 87.8%
1.3E+07	Carrickmacross-Castleblayney Lea-6	1	<80.4%
1320400	Cavan - Belturbet Lea-6	1	<80.4%
1.3E+07	Drogheda Rural Lea-4	2	80.4% to 83.6%
1.3E+07	Drogheda Urban Lea-6	2	80.4% to 83.6%
1.3E+07	Dundalk South Lea-7	2	80.4% to 83.6%
1.3E+07	Dundalk-Carlingford Lea-6	1	<80.4%
1.3E+07	Kells Lea-7	4	86.0% to 87.8%
1.3E+07	Laytown Bettystown-Lea-7	3	83.6% to 86.0%
1.3E+07	Monaghan Lea-7	1	<80.4%
1.3E+07	Navan Lea-7	2	80.4% to 83.6%
1.3E+07	Ratoath Lea-7	7	89.7% to 90.6%
1.3E+07	Trim Lea-6	3	83.6% to 86.0%

Table B: Vaccination rate by Local Electoral Authority (LEA) for population aged 12 and over (fully vaccinated) on 09 Septe

Source: CSO Ireland, 2021

COVID-19 Vaccine

Do you know you can get a COVID-19 vaccine from:

- Community Vaccination Centres
- Some GP Practices
- Participating Pharmacies

Book your appointment at HSE Community Vaccination Centre on: https://vaccine.hse.ie/ **or Freephone HSE Live on:** 1800 700 700
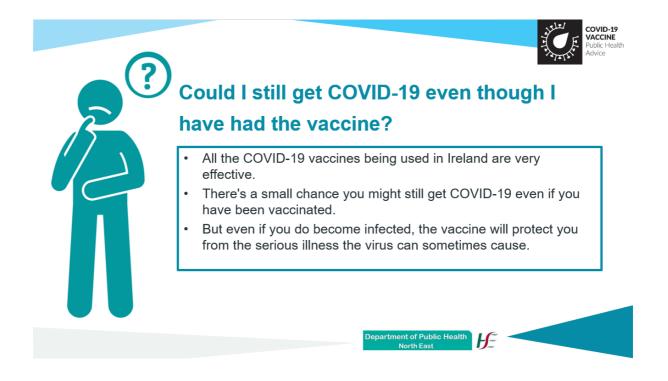
Find a pharmacy to book your vaccine appointment: https://www2.hse.ie/Apps/Services/PharmaciesServiceList.aspx
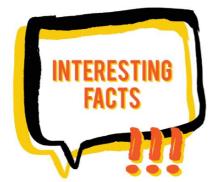
Midlands Louth Meath
Community Healthcare
Organisation

**Department of Public Health
North East**

COVID-19 Vaccines: Frequently Asked Questions

Could I still get COVID-19 even though I have had the vaccine?

- All the COVID-19 vaccines being used in Ireland are very effective.
- There's a small chance you might still get COVID-19 even if you have been vaccinated.
- But even if you do become infected, the vaccine will protect you from the serious illness the virus can sometimes cause.

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North East

The COVID-19 vaccine cannot give you COVID-19

INTERESTING FACTS

- The vaccines being used in Ireland do not contain any of the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means that a COVID-19 vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID-19.
- It typically takes a few weeks for the body to build immunity after vaccination. That means it's possible a person could be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 just before or just after vaccination and still get sick. This is because the vaccine has not had enough time to provide protection.

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Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe in pregnancy and for breastfeeding mothers?

- The overall risk of severe COVID-19 illness in pregnancy is low. However, pregnant women with COVID-19 infection are more likely to become very unwell necessitating ICU admission with poor outcomes than either pregnant women without COVID-19 or similar aged non-pregnant women with COVID-19.
- Poor outcomes may include late miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm birth or maternal deaths.
- Pregnant women from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds may be more likely to be admitted to hospital with COVID-19 disease than other pregnant women.
- There is now a lot of evidence on the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination showing that that the benefits of vaccination outweigh any known or potential risks of COVID-19 vaccination during any stage of pregnancy.
- For these reasons pregnant women should be offered COVID-19 vaccination and they can receive it at any stage in their pregnancy.
- There is no known reason to avoid breastfeeding and all COVID-19 vaccines can be given to women who are breastfeeding.
- Vaccination is the best way to protect both mother and baby from serious harm from COVID-19.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility?

- There has been a lot of "fake news" about the effects of COVID-19 on fertility
- But we can reassure people that there is **no evidence** that any of the COVID-19 vaccines in use in Ireland will affect your fertility.
- You don't need to leave a gap between having the vaccine and trying to conceive, or having fertility treatments like IVF.

Do I need the vaccine if I've had COVID-19 already?

Yes you should still get the COVID-19 vaccine to protect you against infection.

You need to wait 4 weeks after the start of symptoms or being diagnosed

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After I get the COVID-19 vaccine, can I stop wearing my mask?

- Unfortunately no!
- There is still a small chance you might get COVID-19 after you have had the vaccine.
- There is also a chance that you might spread COVID-19, even if you don't get sick yourself.
- That is why it is so important to wash your hands, keep your distance and wear a face covering.

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