

Office of the Medical Officer of Health
19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 3RR

Friday, 22 October 2021

Dear parents/carers and children/young people,

I would like to start by thanking you for your continued support, which has contributed to keeping the spread of COVID-19 in schools low this term, allowing for a successful start to the new school year.

I am particularly grateful to 6,685 students and staff who have already registered as part of the Lateral Flow Test (LFT) scheme this term, we have received more than 18,000 test results to date. We must continue to push these figures up – LFTs are the best way of keeping children in learning while keeping us all safe. For those who are yet to join the LFT scheme, this can be done by registering online on gov.je.

Lateral Flow Tests during Half Term and before returning to school

Testing twice a week is important as it allows us to identify positive cases in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 to our friends, families and teachers. It is vital that we do not lose this momentum during half-term when you might be socialising more and attending Halloween events and parties.

Secondary school and college students should continue to take LFTs twice weekly during half-term, particularly before mixing with friends from different social groups, as well as visiting vulnerable family members or friends who are more at risk from COVID-19.

It is also important that these students take an LFT and submit the results online before returning to school on Monday, 1 November. Around 1 in 3 people with COVID do not experience any symptoms, so LFTs are an important way to detect cases quickly and ensure that we do not transmit the virus to other students and teachers.

COVID vaccination for 12-to-17-year-olds

Young people aged 12-to-17-years old are currently eligible for one dose of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, following the approval from the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), and the four Chief Medical Officers of Health in the UK, who concluded it is safe and effective to vaccinate this age group. To date, 30% of 12- to 17-year-olds in Jersey have already received their vaccination. I strongly encourage those not yet vaccinated to come forward and avail themselves of this opportunity to protect themselves and others.

The Vaccination Centre, at Fort Regent, will be open throughout half-term for all eligible age groups, so please consider using this time to get your COVID-19 vaccine if you have not already done so. Appointments can be booked online at gov.je/vaccine.

The team at Fort Regent have a specialist area, with staff who are experienced in vaccinating young people to make the process as welcoming as possible. Medical staff at the Vaccination Centre are always on hand to assist with any queries or concerns.

Parental, guardian or carer consent will be sought prior to vaccination, in line with existing vaccination programmes for children and young people.

Half-Term guidance for nursery and primary school aged children

For nursery and primary school aged children, we are continuing to encourage personal protective behaviours, including regular hand washing and good respiratory hygiene (“catch it, bin it, kill it”), cleaning shared toys and equipment after use by different children, and ensuring where possible that children socialise in well-ventilated spaces.

Flu vaccination

So far, we have seen just under 2,000 children and young people under the age of 18 receive the flu vaccine in schools, which is extremely encouraging. Again, I would urge those who have not been vaccinated against flu to get vaccinated. Almost all childhood flu admissions into hospital occurs in those who have not been vaccinated. It also prevents transmission to others including family and friends.

Symptoms

As we are entering winter and the flu season, it is essential that we all remain vigilant for COVID-19 symptoms which are often similar to flu symptoms.

The three classic main symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough, fever/high temperature and a change or loss of smell and/or taste. Other symptoms can also be seen – please see the gov.uk website

If you or a child in your care develops any of the symptoms above, please isolate immediately and book a PCR test online or by calling the Coronavirus helpline on 0800 735 5566.

I thank you all once again for your tremendous and continued efforts and I wish you an enjoyable, safe and relaxing half-term break.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan Muscat', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Ivan Muscat MBE
Deputy Medical Officer of Health