An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health

16 December 2020

Dear Parents,

Through the hard work of you, your family, teachers and people all across the community, Ireland has managed to suppress COVID-19 to the lowest incidence levels in the EU in recent weeks. We collectively have managed to slow the spread of the virus and protect each other throughout this pandemic. Schools continue to be safe places, and this is due to the collective effort of the entire school community.

However, as we enter the Christmas season, we should remember that this highly contagious virus is still circulating. We need to continue to protect ourselves and our loved ones by washing our hands regularly, covering our coughs and sneezes, physically distancing, wearing face coverings and avoiding crowds.

Please consider making a plan for Christmas and the New Year period and consider especially whether you will be meeting loved ones who are medically vulnerable. We know that the incubation period for COVID-19 can be up to 14 days and people can be infectious even if they have no symptoms.

Given that we are less than 14 days from Christmas Day, if you know you and your family will be meeting loved ones who are older or who are medically vulnerable over Christmas, plan to restrict your social interactions and minimise the number of people you meet from now.

Please avoid all non-essential domestic and international travel. Anyone who does travel internationally must restrict their movements for 14 days on arrival into Ireland. Alternatively, travellers may take a PCR test on day 5 after arrival and should continue to restrict their movements until they receive a 'not detected' result.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to note that the children's flu vaccination programme is now extended to include all children between the ages of 2-17 years to further protect our families and community. The children's flu vaccine is given as a nasal spray through participating GP practices and pharmacies and only takes a few minutes. More information is available at www.hse.ie/flu.

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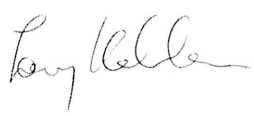
We are actively planning to begin vaccinating people for COVID-19 in early 2021. We cannot afford to drop our guard now. When attending the workplace or school, please be vigilant and remind your children to follow all the hygiene and safety measures that have been put in place to prevent and control COVID-19 infection that have proved to be very successful since schools reopened.

Wishing you and your family a safe and peaceful Christmas.

Yours,



Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer