



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

FROM: Dr Eamonn O'Moore, Director National Health Protection;
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RE: Significant increase in viral infections and Group A Strep infections

DATE: 7th December 2022

There has been a large increase in general viral infections among children and young people this winter.

There have also been recent concerns about a rare bacterial infection. This infection is iGAS (an invasive Group A Streptococcal infection). It is also known as Group A Strep.

Significant increase in viral infections

We have seen a significant increase in the usual winter viral infections. This includes an increase in flu. This is because children are mixing together more. In previous years social contact was much reduced. This in turn reduced the rates of routine infection.

Typical symptoms of viral infections

Symptoms of viral infections typically include:

- runny or blocked nose
- mild fever
- cough
- lethargy (tiredness)

Many children with viral infections also have a generalised rash.

Most children with viral infections can safely be cared for at home.

More information can be found at <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/colds-coughs-children/>

Group A Strep and related bacterial infections

There have been cases of serious bacterial infections, specifically Group A Strep.

Severe infection is rare. Group A Strep more commonly causes infections such as:

- tonsillitis
- scarlet fever
- skin infections

Ireland has seen cases of more serious infections recently. But so far there has been no increase compared to what we saw before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The most important ways to prevent the spread of all infections are:

- making sure anyone unwell stays at home
- children and adults are up to date with their recommended vaccines, including flu

4. If you are concerned about your child

If you are concerned your child may be unwell, please check [hse.ie](https://www2.hse.ie). There is information on coughs, colds, fever, rashes and symptoms of concern. There is advice on when to contact your GP or go to a hospital emergency department. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/colds-coughs-children/>