



HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre

25-27 Middle Gardiner Street

Dublin, Ireland, D01 A4A3

Ph +353 1 8765300

DirectorHPSC@hpsc.ie

www.hpsc.ie

27th January 2022

Letter for parents of children who attend early learning and childcare facilities.

Dear parent,

I would like to thank you for your ongoing cooperation with public health measures in relation to COVID-19. Although we are at a different stage of the COVID-19 response, it is still important to follow general public health advice including respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene and getting vaccinated when eligible.

The importance of early learning and childcare settings for children is well recognised in relation to their welfare and development.

However, I would like to remind you of the importance of **not** sending children into early learning and childcare settings when they have symptoms, even if they have a negative COVID-19 test. Their symptoms should have almost fully or fully resolved for two days (48 hours) before they return. This is to prevent the introduction of respiratory viral illnesses like COVID--19, Influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) to these settings, with potential outbreaks and hospitalisations.

It is also clear that respiratory viruses transmit less easily outdoors than indoors. Outdoor activity is not a cause of childhood illness provided they wear suitable clothing.

If your child has a positive test result

If your child has a positive test result (either antigen test or PCR test) then they should self-isolate for a full 7 days from the date of onset of their symptoms, or if they have no symptoms, from the date of the positive test result. This will reduce the risk of onward transmission to others. Children aged between 9 and 12 years should wear a mask as much as is reasonably practical for 10 days from the date of onset of their symptoms, or if they have no symptoms, from the date of the positive test result, as this will reduce the risk of infecting others. Children under 9 years of age do not need to wear masks. It is preferable that children aged between 9 and 12 years wear surgical masks if these fit well, but otherwise a well-fitting cloth mask can be worn. Children can exit self-isolation after 7 days if their symptoms have almost fully or fully resolved for the final 2 days (48 hours) of this 7-day period and can return to early learning and childcare settings. Please see [here](#) for further information.

Children with positive tests, as long as they have no symptoms, can return to early learning and childcare settings after the 7 full days of self-isolation, as these are controlled environments. However, it is also advised, especially during day 8, day 9 and day 10 to limit close contact with other people outside their household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces.

Close contacts

Close contacts of all ages (including children), who have no symptoms, (regardless of vaccination status), and who have recovered from COVID-19 since December 1st 2021 do not need to restrict their movements or to get tested unless they become symptomatic. However, children aged 9-12 years old should wear a well fitted mask as frequently as is reasonably practical for 10 days. A medical grade (surgical) mask is preferable, if it fits the child well; otherwise a well-fitting cloth mask can be worn. Children under 9 years of age don't need to wear a mask.

Children aged 0-12 years old, who are **household contacts of a case**, and have not had Covid-19 infection since December 1st 2021 and who do not have symptoms should:

- Restrict their movements for 7 full days. Restricted movements should begin from date of last contact with positive case (if known) or if not, from the date they are advised they are a contact.
- Children aged 9-12 years old, who are household contacts of a case, should wear a well fitted mask for a 10-day period – please see above.
- Household contacts who are aged 0-3 years who do not have symptoms are not required to undertake testing unless they develop symptoms. If symptoms develop within this age group, a PCR test is required. Household close contacts aged 4-12 years old who do not have symptoms should take regular antigen tests over 7 days, with the last test on day 7 of restricted movements (ie as soon as possible, 2 days later and on day 7).

In any instance when a child becomes symptomatic, they should

- self-isolate
- be tested: 0-3 years old should get a PCR test; 4-12 years old should perform **three** antigen tests over three consecutive days. The first test should be performed as soon as possible.

When it is not possible for a case in a household to self-isolate

Sometimes it is not possible for a case in a household to self-isolate from other members of the household, for example young children who need to be cared for. However it is important, to reduce the risk of ongoing spread that members of the household restrict their movements, wear masks and undertake testing. In **this situation** if a household contact has **no symptoms**, they should:

- Restrict their movements for 14 full days
- Children aged 9-12 years old should wear a well fitted mask as frequently as is reasonably practical during the 14-day period. A medical grade (surgical) mask is preferable, if it fits the child well; otherwise a well-fitting cloth mask can be worn.
- Perform 6 antigen tests over 14 days (the first test should be performed as soon as possible and repeated at regular intervals with the final test performed on day 14). Household contacts who are aged 0-3 years who do not have symptoms are not required to undertake testing unless they develop symptoms. If symptoms develop within this age group, a PCR test is required
- If any household contact develops symptoms, they should immediately self-isolate and get tested.

Please see [here](#) for further information including definitions.

Dr John Cuddihy,
Acting National Clinical Director of Health Protection