



# The National Healthy Childhood Programme



## Newsletter 4: Summer 2018

Welcome to the fourth newsletter of the National Healthy Childhood Programme. As children are now on their school holidays we have some timely tips about keeping safe around water and in the sun. We also include very important advice on MMR vaccination and on the dangers of drinking alcohol in pregnancy.



The first six months of 2018 have been very busy and just some of the products from our work are outlined in this issue.

I'd like to thank everyone for their continued support and work and wish you all a safe and healthy summer.

*Dr Phil Jennings,*  
HSE Lead National Healthy Childhood Programme /  
Director of Public Health (Laois/Offaly/Longford/Westmeath)

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## mychild.ie New test website – your feedback is needed

Your feedback is invited on a new test website ahead of its public launch later this year. The beta site is a first version of MyChild.ie, the new HSE pregnancy and child health resource for parents.

MyChild.ie is designed to:

- meet the needs of users – parents of children aged 0 to 3 and parents-to-be
- provide evidence-based information from experts
- make it easy for users to find relevant information

Thinking about the parents you work with and their information needs, you can use the feedback button at the bottom of each page. We are particularly keen to get your perspective if you are pregnant or the parent of a child aged 0 to 3. If you work with groups of parents, please invite them to take a look. We are using this beta site to test it with users and get feedback on the content. It is also being used to identify any technical issues.

Nurture Programme implementation team members and other subject matter experts across the HSE have been developing the content for a wide range of topics, many of which currently are not present on HSE websites. We are extremely grateful to all of those involved in this project so far. Their expertise and experience with parents is being matched with the latest evidence in communicating public and patient information online.

When launched, the website will have hundreds of pages. The beta site contains a limited number of topics across pregnancy, labour and birth, babies and toddlers and parenting. Many more will be added over the coming months. Research with parents has informed the content, approach and design.

The content has been edited and designed by HSE communications staff according to the [new HSE content guide](#), [Plain English guidelines](#) and to incorporate search engine data and analysis. We will continue to review and improve articles based on user feedback in the coming months.

MyChild.ie is one of the many elements of the *Nurture Programme – Infant Health and Wellbeing* being delivered this year.

Go to [www.mychild.ie](http://www.mychild.ie) or email [sorcha.nicmhathuna@hse.ie](mailto:sorcha.nicmhathuna@hse.ie) for further information.





## National Healthy Childhood Training Programme

As part of the National Healthy Childhood Programme, and with the support of Atlantic Philanthropies funding, we are developing a comprehensive suite of training resources. This blended learning programme has been designed by and for professionals who deliver child health services. It will ensure that the service delivered is to the highest standard and is based on the most up-to-date evidence available. This will assist in the prevention and early identification of problems in childhood which will reduce health inequalities and chronic disease in later life.



You can find out more about the programme by viewing this short animation <https://youtu.be/8xrU4nBJ2Sk>.

Training to be rolled out over the coming months include:

- |                                          |                                        |                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| * Child Safety Programme (available now) | * Immunisations                        | * Growth Monitoring                                                                                |
| * Breastfeeding                          | * Infant Mental Health                 | * Nutrition (incl. allergies and intolerances, weaning, fussy eaters, healthy weight for children) |
| * Physical and developmental assessment  | * National Newborn Bloodspot Screening |                                                                                                    |
| * Child and Family Needs Assessment      | * Record Keeping                       |                                                                                                    |

You will be able to select the modules that suit your professional development and service needs. The interactive training has lots of scenarios and practical work-based learning activities that will help you apply the learning in practice. All modules are CPD accredited.

The training will be accessible through [HSELand](https://hse.ie). If you don't already have an account, just click on the "create an account link" on the main page. You will find the training programmes by selecting "Course Catalogue" and then clicking on the National Healthy Childhood Training Programme icon. If you have any queries please contact [nurture.programme@hse.ie](mailto:nurture.programme@hse.ie).

## Child Safety Programme - eLearning and updated resources launched

We have just launched a new resource from the National Healthy Childhood Programme. It builds on the original Child Safety Awareness Programme (CSAP) which had not reached full national coverage. That programme has been reviewed and updated to reflect the latest evidence. It is now available as the **Child Safety Programme (CSP)**.

Unintentional injuries (accidents) remain a major public health challenge. They are a leading cause of death and harm among children in Ireland.

Children in the 0 to 5 year age group are most at risk of injuries in the home. The Child Safety Programme (CSP) supports public health nurses in their promotion of child safety to parents and carers of these children during the child health contacts. By doing so it aims to reduce the risk of childhood unintentional injury.

The updated programme now includes the following resources:

- an **eLearning module** with CPD accreditation
- an updated [manual](#) for each PHN delivering core child health contacts
- a [wall chart](#) and a [checklist](#) for PHNs to give to parents at these contacts

These resources have been developed in consultation with HSE colleagues through the implementation teams of the Nurture Programme.



### Accessing the new resources

- The **eLearning module** is available on [HSELand](https://hse.ie).
- Supplies of **manuals, wall charts and checklists** have been sent to DPHNs for distribution to each PHN delivering the child health contacts. Each DPHN area will have received a three month (approx.) supply of wall charts and checklists. **Replacement supplies** of these two items will be available to order from [healthpromotion.ie](https://healthpromotion.ie). These are restricted items which can only be ordered by a designated person in each DPHN area. Further details will be circulated.
- **Guidelines and resources** have also been developed to support PHNs delivering the Child Safety Programme. These are available through the "[For PHNs delivering the CSP](#)" link on [www.hse.ie/childsafety](https://www.hse.ie/childsafety). The username and password for that link has been sent to DPHNs for cascading to their teams.

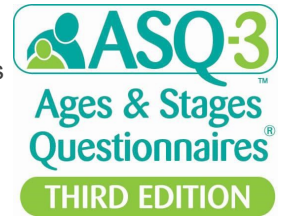
If you have any queries please contact [nurture.programme@hse.ie](mailto:nurture.programme@hse.ie).

*Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to bring this revised programme to fruition. Its continued implementation will reduce the harm and deaths caused by unintentional injury to young children in Ireland.*



## Ages and Stages Questionnaire

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3™) is a parent-completed screening questionnaire that is used all over the world for assessing the development of young children. It reliably identifies children from one month to 5½ years who may be at risk of developmental delay in five areas: communication; gross motor; fine motor; problem solving and personal-social.



The National Steering Group for the Revised Child Health Programme has recommended the ASQ-3™ as the developmental screening tool of choice. The ASQ-3™ will be rolled out nationally. Initially the roll out will be for all children at their 21-24 month public health nursing health assessment contact. This will ensure that every child who attends for the 21-24 month contact will have their development assessed and monitored in a standardised way as per current best practice. It will facilitate early identification and onward referral of children who may be at risk of developmental delay thus ensuring early therapeutic intervention where indicated which will lead to better outcomes for children. It is planned to expand the use of the ASQ-3™ to all developmental assessments in due course. The ASQ-3™ is already in use in some HSE areas.

The National Healthy Childhood Programme has developed an implementation plan to ensure a smooth introduction of the ASQ-3™ into practice. Work progressed to date includes:

- provision of five accredited 'Train the Trainer' education days facilitated by Prof. Farhana Sharif and Ms. Jane Dare, and attended by 133 Registered Public Health Nurses (RPHNs) and Community Medical Doctors (CMDs)
- a NMBI accredited eLearning module on 'How to use the ASQ-3™' which will be available to all relevant staff via HSE LanD in July
- development of a national PPPG to inform and guide all staff who will use the ASQ-3™ about the requisite steps to be followed when using the ASQ-3™ in their practice – this will be signed off nationally in the coming weeks
- provision of a set of equipment for every PHN and CMD providing developmental assessments (July 2018)

All DPHNs will be invited to express an interest in implementing the ASQ-3™ in their area. An implementation team will be convened in each DPHN area to oversee and monitor the introduction of the ASQ-3™. There will be an initial eight-week implementation phase during which any issues or problems that arise can be resolved prior to mainstreaming the ASQ-3™ into daily practice. Ongoing support will be available from the national team during this time.

It is hoped to have the vast majority of parents completing the ASQ-3™ in relation to their two year old by January 2019.

*Paul Marsden, Project Manager National Child Screening Programmes & Chair ASQ-3 Implementation Group*

## Sleep awareness training courses

A one day children's sleep awareness training course for public health nurses (PHNs) commenced across the country in May. The course has been granted 6 CEUs by NMBI. The facilitators of the courses are Denise Gillespie (ANP Child Health and Parenting Donegal), Sinead Lawlor (PHN Pre School Children's Sleep Clinic Kildare/ West Wicklow), Jane Dare (ADPHN – CHO 7 Dublin South West) and Mandy Gurney & Juliet Newton (Millpond Sleep Clinic UK).



The aim of the course is to give PHNs evidence-based knowledge regarding normal sleep patterns/cycles and sleep needs of children. The course explores the common types and causes of sleep difficulties in children. PHNs are given information to provide to families on establishing good sleep hygiene and bedtime routines, and can provide anticipatory advice in the prevention of sleep problems.

The day contains a mixture of theory lectures, workshops and case studies to aid learning. Participants are provided with a copy of *Teach Your Child to Sleep* (Millpond Sleep Clinic) and tip sheets from *A Clinical Guide to Pediatric Sleep* (Mindell & Owens, 2015). The tip sheets contain advice on normal sleep habits and prevention of problems and common sleep interventions and can be given to parents. Each ADPHN area will be provided with a copy of the Mindell & Owens book which gives access to the PDF format of the tip sheets. PHNs will then have online access to the tip sheets through shared drives or via email.

To date, the course has been delivered in 18 locations with 345 participants from Dublin, Limerick, Clare, Tipperary, Sligo, Roscommon, Monaghan, Cavan, Cork. The courses will continue to run in other locations in the Autumn. Evaluations to date have been positive with PHNs saying:

*“Presentation was excellent and so relevant to our role.”*

*“Very organised, informative session very relevant to PHN working.”*

If you have any queries in relation to this training please contact: [nurture.programme@hse.ie](mailto:nurture.programme@hse.ie)

*Sinead Lawlor, PHN Pre School Children's Sleep Clinic Kildare/ West Wicklow*





### ***In seconds, water can steal a life - watch your child at all times***

The summer is in full swing and there are lots of opportunities for children to have fun around water. To make sure that this time is as safe as possible, parents and carers need to keep a few things in mind while their children are enjoying swimming pools, paddling pools or waterways.

#### **Remember that drowning usually happens in an instant, in silence and can happen in a very small amount of water.**

There is no splashing or screaming. In Ireland, 30 children aged 14 years and younger have drowned in the last 10 years. This is the equivalent of an average classroom (IWS, 2018).

**All children need constant and uninterrupted adult supervision around water.** It is very easy to get distracted while enjoying the sun, chatting, looking at your phone or reading. But it is important that you do not take your eyes off your child when they are near or in water. Lifeguards are not babysitters - it is not possible for them to supervise each child individually. If you have to leave, ask another adult you know to supervise. Never ask an older child to supervise younger children. Children under five years old and weak swimmers need an extra level of supervision. They must have a capable adult swimmer in arm's reach so if they slip underwater, they can be pulled to safety immediately. If using buoyancy aids (such as arm bands) make sure they have an approved safety standard mark, fit properly and are appropriate for your child's age and developmental stage. They do not replace the need for adult supervision.

**Check out the safety arrangements first.** The best plan is to swim at lifeguarded waterways. If this is not possible then swim at recognised, traditionally safe bathing areas and check that there is life saving equipment nearby. Know how deep the water is and watch out for sudden drops. Obey any "Do not swim" notices and check [www.beaches.ie](http://www.beaches.ie) to find bathing areas (inland and coastal) with safe water quality. When visiting a swimming pool or holiday resort for the first time, familiarise yourself with the surroundings. Remember children can wander off very quickly and silently. Always check:



- that children cannot access the pool areas without an adult being present
- how deep the water is, particularly in pools without markings
- for child or baby pools that may be next to the main pool without any barrier between them
- where the lifeguard is and that life buoys are present
- you can clearly see the bottom of the pool - if you can't it means poor water quality that's not safe for swimming

**Teach your child how to be safe and lead by example by modelling safe behaviour.** Children learn from what adults do, more than from what we say! From an early age talk to children about staying safe around water and show them how. This helps them to grow up with a respect for water and an understanding of how to be safe. Explain that they should let an adult check the water before they get in and they should always obey the lifeguard's instructions. They need to stay in their depth and they should never swim alone. Tell them that swimming in open water is very different to swimming in a pool. This is because there will be uneven surfaces, currents, tides, cold water and changes to the weather to keep in mind. Explain that inflatable toys should never be used on open water because it is very easy to be blown away from shore and away from safety. Remind them too that they should never push someone into the water or jump or pull on anyone who is in the water. Personal flotation devices (such as life jackets) should always be worn during water-based activities such as boating or canoeing. But no matter how well young children may appear to take on board what you say, remember they are not capable of being responsible for their own safety. That is the adult's job. Constant adult supervision around water is key to young children's safety.

**Encourage your child to learn how to swim.** It is great physical activity. It will also help them to enjoy the water, be safer around it and build their confidence. For adults who cannot swim, it is never too late to learn! Talk to staff in your local swimming pool about swimming lessons for adults.

**Protect your child's health.** Children can get cold quickly, even in a heated pool. If you notice your child shivering, or if they complain of cramps, get them out of the water straight away and warmed up. Remember, even when air temperatures are high, water temperatures in Irish waterways remain quite cool. When swimming outdoors, your child needs to wear appropriate sunscreen and clothing to protect them from the sun. Use swim nappies for children who are not yet toilet trained, or who are newly toilet trained, and take older children on frequent toilet breaks. Maintain good hygiene - wash or shower before and after using a swimming pool and always make sure your children wash their hands after using the toilet. If your child had a diarrhoeal illness, wait for two weeks after it clears before bringing them swimming. One child with diarrhoea could contaminate an entire swimming pool, even if they are wearing a swim nappy. The *Healthy and safe swimming with your child* [leaflet](#) and [poster](#) offer more advice ([www.hse.ie/childsafety](http://www.hse.ie/childsafety)).

**For more water safety tips and information** visit the Irish Water Safety website. You should also check out their beautifully illustrated PAWS (Primary Aquatics Water Safety) school resources for children - [www.iws.ie](http://www.iws.ie).

***Remember to supervise your child at all times around all water sources - inside and outside the home***



## Are you and your children protected against measles?

Measles is a very infectious disease caused by a virus. It can be very unpleasant and can sometimes lead to serious complications, even death. There have been several outbreaks of measles in Europe in 2018, with 23 deaths from measles occurring in the first three months of this year. Although Ireland has had some measles outbreaks over the past few years, most have been linked to travel within Europe or migration from Europe.

**The outbreaks of measles in Europe mean that the risk of measles being imported into Ireland is very high. Moreover, the risk of getting measles when travelling within Europe is also very high.**

Measles is most common in children, but anyone can get measles if they have not had it before and they have:

- not been vaccinated at all against measles (unvaccinated)
- not received the correct number of vaccinations against measles (incompletely vaccinated)

The vaccine against measles is called the MMR. This is an effective and safe vaccine. All children should be vaccinated with MMR according to the Primary Childhood Immunisation programme.

### All people planning travel in 2018 should:

1. Make sure all children travelling are up to date with their vaccines.
2. Bring any children aged between 6 - 11 months of age for a dose of MMR vaccine before travel. Please note that this does **NOT** replace the vaccine dose at 12 months. It is important to still bring the child for their MMR at 12 months even if they received a vaccine prior to travelling.
3. Check their own vaccine status and that of other adults travelling. If they have never had measles, and have not had two doses of MMR, they should attend their GP for MMR vaccine.
4. **Vaccination against measles is the best way to protect children and adults from the complications of measles.**



## Be SunSmart - always keep your children protected from the sun (at home and abroad)

Children and babies have very sensitive skin which can burn easily. The National Cancer Control Programme warns us that getting a painful sunburn in childhood can double the risk of developing skin cancer in later life, particularly melanoma - the most serious form of skin cancer. However there are some simple steps that you can take that will help protect your child.

- **Keep babies under 6 months in the shade** and dress them in loose-fitting clothes with long sleeves and in long shorts. Make sure they are made from close-woven material that does not allow sunlight through.
- Keep older children safe by following the **SunSmart Code**:

☀️ **Slip** on sun protective clothing

☀️ **Slap** on a hat - a wide brim that gives shade to the face, neck and ears

☀️ **Slop** on sunscreen:

- \* Use a sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher and UVA protection.
- \* For best protection put plenty of sunscreen on dry skin at least 20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply every two hours and always after swimming. This applies to "waterproof" and "water-resistant" products as well.
- \* Don't forget to cover all exposed areas especially the face, ears, nose, lips and tops of the feet.
- \* Skin irritation may occur with the use of sunscreen. Try sunscreen for sensitive skin which will help with this.
- \* No sunscreen gives 100% protection. So it is important to use the other parts of the *SunSmart Code* too.
- \* Sunscreen use on babies under 6 months is not harmful on small areas of a baby's skin but babies under 6 months should be kept in the shade and dressed appropriately.

☀️ **Seek shade** – especially between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

☀️ **Slide on sunglasses** - wrap-around are best - make sure they give as close to 100% UV protection as possible. Use them from as early an age as possible.

☀️ **Share** this information with everyone who looks after your children - including summer camp staff.



Take care on cloudy days too – up to 90% of UV rays can pass through light cloud. For more information about the *SunSmart Code* visit [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie).

**Stay hydrated and stay cool.** Children cannot adjust to changes in temperature as well as adults. They sweat less, reducing the ability of their body to cool down and so they could be at risk of heat exhaustion. Signs of heat exhaustion can include headaches, pale skin, dizziness, loss of appetite, cramps, sweating or a temperature. If someone is showing signs of heat exhaustion they need to be cooled down. Move them to a cool place, give them a cold drink. Lie them down with their legs up. Cool their skin by spraying or sponging it with cool water. To protect against heat exhaustion make sure your child drinks enough fluids and does not overheat. A cool bath, shower or sponge bath will help. Playing in the shade when the sun is at its hottest is a good idea as is keeping their bedroom cool for night time by closing curtains during the day to keep the sun out. Playing in a paddling pool in a shady area may also help. Remember to supervise children at all times when near water.





## Never leave your child alone in a car

It is never safe to leave your child alone in a car - not even for a minute. Always take your child with you when you leave your car. It takes very little time to be at great risk of injury or death when alone in the car. However, in sunny weather the risks are even higher:



- Heat stroke can happen when the body is not able to cool itself quickly enough.
- When the body's temperature reaches 40°C, the internal organs start to shut down. When it reaches 41.7°C death can occur.
- Children are at greater risk for heatstroke because a child's body heats up 3-5 times faster than an adult's.
- Heat stroke can happen in any environment that is too hot.
- Parked cars are particularly dangerous. In just 10 minutes a car can heat up by at least 10°C. So when it is 25°C outside, your parked car could easily reach 35°C in 10 minutes. This could obviously have devastating consequences for a child.
- Opening the window of a parked car does not help keep the inside of a car cool enough to avoid the dangers outlined above.

Remember the importance of taking frequent breaks in a safe place while travelling so that you can check your child is not overheating.

Make sure to give fluids to your child regularly to avoid dehydration.

## If you drink alcohol, so does your baby

Alcohol can damage an unborn baby's developing brain and body. Drinking while pregnant doesn't mean that a baby will definitely be harmed, but it can happen, and the effects may not be evident at birth. The safest thing for pregnant women is **to not drink alcohol at all**.



Alcohol passes from the mother's blood into the baby's blood via the placenta. The placenta does not act as a barrier to alcohol. There is no safe

- *type* of alcohol
- *amount* to consume
- *time* to consume alcohol

Drinking any type of alcohol at any time during pregnancy can cause damage. This is because the baby's brain develops throughout pregnancy. Drinking during the first three months of pregnancy is particularly harmful. This is the time when a baby's body organs and facial features are developing. Drinking alcohol while pregnant can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders including fetal alcohol syndrome.

### What are fetal alcohol spectrum disorders?

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of lifelong physical, behavioural and intellectual disabilities known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). Fetal alcohol syndrome is one condition in this spectrum, where the baby is born at a small size, with a small head and distinctive facial features. Some of the challenges experienced by babies born with FASDs are:

- learning difficulties
- hyperactivity
- low IQ
- difficulties with concentration
- poor reasoning skills
- speech and language problems

### You can help the pregnant woman in your life by

- avoiding drinking alcohol around her
- taking part in social activities with her that don't revolve around alcohol
- helping her to reduce the stress in her life

### For more information and help to stop drinking alcohol:

Visit [www.askaboutalcohol.ie/health/alcohol-and-pregnancy/](http://www.askaboutalcohol.ie/health/alcohol-and-pregnancy/). Pregnant women can talk to their GP, obstetrician or midwife.

### The Editorial Team

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