



RCSI

Infectious Diseases and General Health Policy

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

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1. General Health

Healthcare for RCSI students is provided by the university's primary care service based in Mercer's Medical Centre. The answers to many health queries can be found on the practice [website](#).

Students with significant medical conditions or a known disability should notify RCSI at learningsupport@rcsi.ie to enable RCSI to provide support under the [Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#) which is provided by RCSI to support such students.

RCSI reserves the right to discontinue students who failed to disclose significant health information which may, even with the provision of Reasonable Accommodations, prevent a student from progressing through the academic programme.

At RCSI's sole discretion and where necessary, the assessment of a candidate's ability to progress through the programme will be made by referral to an independent Occupational Health Consultant.

Students have a responsibility to self-care, both for their own benefit and for that of colleagues and the members of the public with whom they will come in contact. This responsibility takes many forms, and includes the providing the clinicians who are involved in your care in Ireland with adequate advance information on any significant ongoing or chronic health issue you have.

This means that students must attend the RCSI Student Health Service, based in Mercer's Medical Centre, to provide it, in confidence, with details of your diagnosis and ongoing treatment plan, so that they may best assist you. This list is not exhaustive but is meant to facilitate the continuity of good quality medical care. All reports should be in English. Some examples of what might be needed include:

- **Diabetes:** List of current medications and blood results over the previous year
- **Asthma:** List of current medications and copy of previous spirometry
- **Ongoing surgical issues:** Relevant copies of specialist reports and investigations
- **Psychiatric illness:** Relevant copies of specialist reports and current treatment plan
- **Gastroenterological issues:** Relevant copies of specialist reports and investigations, particularly endoscopies
- **ADD/ADHD (Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder):**
These conditions do require some special attention as there are difficulties in having these diagnoses made and treated in Ireland. If you have been diagnosed with either of these conditions, the information below is requested.

2. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis and initiation of treatment:

ADD/ADHD diagnosis and treatment are extremely difficult to obtain in Ireland. There are very few suitable resources available in Ireland and none via the public health system. Private options are expensive and frequently have a waiting time of over a year. Assessment and diagnosis of ADD/ADHD are not available through RCSI's Student Health Service.



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Request for ongoing ADHD medication:

If an RCSI student presents to the RCSI Student Health Service seeking continuation of ADHD medication, (e.g. Ritalin / Concerta/ Equasym / Medikilet / Adderall / Provigil / Strattera, etc) which was originally prescribed elsewhere, then they must provide all of the following documentation:

1. A recent report from a suitably qualified professional. This person must have experience in diagnosing ADHD in adolescents and young adults and must also have trained in differential diagnosis and the full range of psychiatric and learning disorders. Professionals typically qualified to make this diagnosis include:
 - Neurologist
 - Psychiatrist
 - Clinical Psychologist
 - Other relevantly trained medical doctors

Documentation must include the name, title, professional qualifications, and license number of the evaluator, including information about specialisation. All evaluation reports must be typed on formal letter-headed paper, signed, dated, and completely legible. All reports must be in English.

2. The documentation must be based on a full evaluation conducted within the previous 3 years.
3. There must be evidence of current impairment. The assessment should consist of more than a self-report; it should also include the history of attentional symptoms, including evidence of ongoing impulsive hyperactive or inattentive behaviour that has significantly impaired functioning over time.
4. The assessment should explore alternative diagnoses, including psychiatric and medical disorders, as well as any educational or cultural factors, which may impact the student and result in behaviours similar to ADHD. The evaluation should provide a broad comprehensive understanding of the student's relevant background including family, academic, behavioural, social, vocational, medical, developmental, and psychiatric history. There should be an emphasis on how the ADHD symptoms have manifested across various settings over time, how the student has coped with the problems, and what success the student has had in coping efforts.
5. The assessment should contain a comprehensive clinical evaluation and/or standardised clinical measures for an attention hyperactivity and impulsivity as delineated in the DSM-V. Any quantitative information needs to be in standard scores and/or percentiles. However, a comprehensive testing battery alone, without illuminating a pattern of real-world functional impairment, will not be sufficient to establish an ADHD diagnosis.
6. A diagnostic report and summary confirming a specific diagnosis of ADHD based on the DSM-V diagnostic criteria should be provided.
7. If any medication has been issued for the treatment of ADHD, the exact medication, dosage and changes in dosage must be carefully outlined.
8. There must be a plan for regular professional review on at least an annual basis by the main clinician. Inadequate documentation includes:



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- a. A prior prescription or medication bottle
- b. A brief letter or medical record, which does not contain all the criteria listed above
- c. Report of psychological testing or brain imaging studies, which do not include a clinical evaluation

3. Infectious Diseases

Students and practitioners in the health care professions have always faced the possibility of exposure to infectious diseases such as Hepatitis B and TB. Equally, students have a responsibility to protect patients, staff and other students from infections which they might introduce. While the risks are small, the increasing efficiency of preventive measures such as vaccination has highlighted the importance of these diseases. RCSI has introduced procedures to ensure students meet this standard.

RCSI students on health professional degrees are classified as Category A Healthcare Workers and, as such, will be screened and vaccinated against the following diseases:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- TB
- Varicella/zoster
- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Meningitis C
- Influenza

This document should be read in conjunction with the RCSI Blood Borne Virus Policy.

Participation in the RCSI vaccination programme is a mandatory part of registering as a student at RCSI for students registered to dentistry, pharmacy, medicine, physiotherapy and physicians associate studies.

By participating in this vaccination programme, students are agreeing to the following:

- It is essential that students bring a copy of their pre-existing personal vaccination records to their first appointment for the vaccination programme. If this documentation is not provided, then there is no evidence of previous vaccinations and it will be assumed that the student is not protected.
- Appropriate tests and clinical follow-up for Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C
- Vaccination for Hepatitis B and follow-up testing, if deemed necessary
- Screening for Tuberculosis if necessary
- Screening for immunity to measles, mumps, rubella, and chicken-pox and to subsequent vaccination for these if necessary
- Positive participation in other health screening measures as deemed appropriate by RCSI, e.g. anti- influenza vaccination in clinical years
- RCSI providing evidence of compliance with these procedures to affiliated partners to support student progress through the programme of study.

This is complex work involving individual assessment, the gathering of formal documentation from previous vaccinations, blood tests to confirm current immune status for different diseases, administration of a vaccination



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programme (unique to each individual), and appropriate follow-up. This work is carried out by the RCSI Student Health Service based in [Mercer's Medical Centre](#).

Students will only be contacted via their registered mobile number or RCSI email address (not gmail or other). It is the student's responsibility to inform RCSI and Mercer's Medical Centre if their mobile number changes, by emailing registry@rcsi.ie and calling 01-4022 300 or by dropping the information into the Mercers Medical Centre in-person.

As this programme continues over several years, it is vital that students inform Mercer's Medical Centre if they have:

- New contact details (address or mobile number)
- Change in their health status (e.g. new diagnosis)

It is also very important that students attend for appointments when requested. There are over three thousand attendances required per year to run this programme, and individual appointments cannot be offered. All RCSI staff members are aware of this programme and understand that a student may have to miss some lectures to attend scheduled appointments. Failure to attend because of a lecture is not a valid excuse.

Failure to comply with information requests or to attend appointments at Mercers Medical Centre will be considered a breach under the RCSI Disciplinary Regulations and may result in issuance of a sanction under the RCSI Disciplinary Regulations..

Please understand that the consequences of failing to engage with the vaccination programme could lead to a sanction up to and including expulsion which, if this were to occur, would mean that a student would not qualify through RCSI.

The most time-consuming element of the programme is vaccination against Hepatitis B which comprises 3 shots over a six-month period with a follow-up blood test two months later to confirm seroconversion. Up to 10% of students will be negative at this point and will need to have the entire course again. This obviously has implications for starting clinical attachments, patient contact, or doing electives, etc., and is another reason to start the programme as early as possible. Many elective hospitals and prospective employers seek confirmation of your immunisation status. If this is not completed and supplied to them, then you will not be granted such an elective or job.

The bulk of this work should be completed in your first year. Subsequent clinical years will require some further appointments.

On average a first-year student will need to be seen on five occasions (although some may need up to ten attendances, e.g. if their initial Hep B course is unsuccessful), while in later years a single annual attendance is likely to be sufficient for most students.

4. Pregnancy

Most of these vaccines are contra-indicated in pregnancy. It is extremely important that you do not proceed with vaccinations if you are, or may become, pregnant over the course of the immunisations. You should discuss this with the clinical staff in Mercer's Medical Centre. This may impact on your ability to progress on time through the programme.



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5. Costs

a) **New Entrants / First Year: i.e.: all newly registered RCSI students**

A standard vaccination capitation fee, payable by all students, irrespective of past vaccination history or number of attendances required, is charged in your first-year fees. This vaccination fee will cover the Health Screening Package (First year screening and vaccination programme - Hepatitis B; Hepatitis C; Measles; Mumps; Rubella; Varicella; Tuberculosis; Pertussis). There will be an additional charge if Varicella vaccination is needed.

b) **Other Years:**

Elective Applications

If a student wishes to have an [elective application](#) form completed, they must make an appointment to see the nurse in Mercer's Medical Centre. Please inform staff at the time of making the appointment that this relates to an [elective application](#) form. Forms will not be signed unless you see the nurse, and each visit with the nurse will incur a fee.

This fee covers:

- Elective form signing (maximum three forms per visit)
 - Copies of blood test results
 - Official certification of immunisation and blood results
 - Vaccination record letter
- If other blood tests are required, there will be a [further charge](#) for the tests.
 - If vaccinations are required for an elective attachment there will be [a charge](#) for vaccines

6. Disease/Virus

Hepatitis B

1. First-year students must attend for blood tests (Hepatitis B Surface Antigen, Hepatitis B Core Antibody, and Hepatitis B antibody if you have already had Hepatitis B vaccinations) taken by the RCSI Student Health Service.
2. Non-immune students are required to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B through the programme carried out by the RCSI Student Health Service. Follow-up serology for evidence of immunity must be taken by the RCSI Student Health Service.
3. Students who show evidence of Hepatitis B or other serious infectivity are referred to the RCSI Blood Borne Viruses Policy.

Hepatitis C

1. All students will be screened for Hepatitis C in first-year and again before their clinical attachments.

Measles, Mumps and Rubella

As the clinical interpretation of mumps serology post-vaccine can be challenging, detectable mumps IgG at a



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single time-point is not considered sufficient evidence for immunity. Administration of two doses of MMR vaccine is preferred to repeat serological testing.

1. Students must provide evidence of having received two doses of MMR.
2. Students without any prior vaccination or who cannot provide evidence of having received both doses of MMR will receive the recommended course of MMR (two doses, given at least one month apart) carried out by the RCSI Student Health Service, unless otherwise contra-indicated.

Pertussis (whooping cough)

1. A booster dose of a low-dose pertussis containing vaccine (Tdap-Boostrix) will be administered to students who come into contact with infants, pregnant women and the immunocompromised to prevent transmission of this disease. If records of recent vaccination are not available, this vaccine is part of the first-year Student Vaccination Programme.

Chicken pox (Varicella)

1. Students without a definite history of chickenpox or vaccination will be considered non-immune and will be tested for the presence of immunity to the Varicella Zoster virus (VZV).
2. Non-immune students will need vaccination against VZV through the programme carried out by the RCSI Student Health Service. Vaccination via Student Health will incur an additional cost to the Healthcare Screening Package fee.

Students may choose to get these vaccinations elsewhere e.g. with their family physician, and, if so, it is essential that a copy of the post-vaccination blood test confirming immunity is provided to Mercer's Medical Centre. If a student comes into contact with chicken pox and cannot demonstrate immunity, they will be removed from clinical duties and patient contact for 21 days. Also, students may wish to participate in overseas elective attachments and many of these insist on evidence of immunity to Varicella.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Students registered to any of the RCSI primary healthcare qualification programmes will be assessed in relation to TB as part of the First-Year Vaccination programme.

Quantiferon (IGRA) blood test: this is a screening test to detect the presence of active TB in an individual. This will be compulsory for any students who are identified to be at possible risk based on their declaration of close contact with a TB case, suggestive symptoms, high risk travel or the absence of a BCG scar. The aim is to protect future patients, the students, their classmates, staff and colleagues. This test may need to be repeated in the future for maximal reassurance.

Medical Referrals: In the first instance, the Practice Nurse in Mercer's Medical Centre will organise some basic investigations, including blood tests (FBC and CRP), MSU (for sterile pyuria), and chest x-ray (referral form to state "being screened for TB").

The student will then be examined by a nominated doctor in Mercer's Medical Centre who will also review the questionnaire and investigation results. If clinical suspicion of active or latent TB remains, then the student will be referred to a consultant physician for further assessment and/or treatment.

Meningitis C

1. Students should provide evidence of receiving one dose of Meningitis C vaccine.



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2. Otherwise, students will be required to obtain a single shot vaccination offered vaccination (a single shot).

HIV

The policy for screening health professional students for HIV infection in Ireland is under review at present. Students who are HIV positive or who think they may be, must inform Mercers Medical Centre and the Associate Director for Academic Affairs as soon as possible via registry@rcsi.ie. Students are referred to the Blood Borne virus policy for further information.

Covid-19

Even if you have previously been fully vaccinated, it is important to remember that you can still transmit the virus to others (but remain asymptomatic yourself), and also that vaccination is not successful in at least 5% of people. For these reasons, if you become symptomatic, or are a close contact, then restrictions might apply, particularly for clinical placements. Up-to-date advice will be available from mercersmedicalcentre.com

7. Outbreak Situations

1. In the event of an outbreak of any infectious illness on campus, in clinical locations, or in the wider local community, students are required to adhere to all infection control measures recommended during that outbreak.
2. Students who contract an infectious illness should adhere strictly to the minimum period of isolation recommended and must not return to the clinical environment until that period has elapsed and they have recovered from their illness.
3. Students should avail of any other appropriate immunisation as and when recommended during an outbreak situation. This may include obtaining boosters to previously completed primary immunisation courses.

Active Infection

Students who show evidence of active infection at any stage of their professional career will be required to withdraw from patient contact and may also be temporarily excluded from other university activities, undertake treatment, and demonstrate non-infectivity before re-admission.

8. ADVICE TO STUDENTS WITH SERIOUS CONTAGIOUS/INFECTIOUS DISEASES

It is unethical for students who believe that they might be infected with a serious contagious disease (e.g. Hepatitis, HIV etc.) not to seek and accept advice from professional colleagues in relation to limiting their studies and practice in order to protect their patients, fellow students and staff. Colleagues who are consulted have a dual role. They must counsel and support the student concerned, but they must ensure that the student does not pose a risk to patients and others. If such a risk exists, the Associate Director for Academic Affairs must be informed as soon as possible.

In the event that a student breaches this policy they will be liable to disciplinary action under the RCSI's Disciplinary Regulations which could lead to a sanction being imposed up to and including expulsion.

9. Summary of Vaccination Process

1. It is important that students read the key student policy documents available prior to registration (Infectious



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Diseases and General Health Policy and Blood Borne Virus Policy).

- 2 Mercer's will contact students by email ahead of the start date in RCSI, and students are required to forward relevant vaccination records. This helps the Student Vaccination Programme (SVP) run as efficiently and safely as possible by providing information prior to arrival at RCSI, and determine individual needs for this vaccination programme.
- 3 All new students are invited to an Orientation Day and given further information on this screening and vaccination programme.
- 4 Mercer's Medical Centre will contact students with the date and time of the first appointment. Students must attend at the scheduled time. Mercer's Medical Centre cannot offer alternative appointments. All RCSI staff are aware of this programme and understand that you may have to miss some lectures to attend this. Failure to attend because of a lecture is not a valid excuse.
- 5 Students must return all requested forms on time.
- 6 Follow-up appointments are issued as needed.

In the event that a student breaches this policy, students will be liable to disciplinary action under the RCSI's Disciplinary Regulations which could lead to a sanction being imposed up to and including expulsion.



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10. Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I get a copy of the Vaccination/Screening Programme Form?

Full details will be emailed to you.

Who must complete the Vaccination/Screening Programme Form?

All incoming students on primary healthcare qualification programmes, regardless of age, must complete the form.

What should I do if my physician doesn't speak English?

You will need to have the information for the form and all your relevant records translated into English.

Can I scan my immunisation records and send them attached to an e-mail?

No. Mercer's will contact you by email ahead of your start date in RCSI and you will be instructed on how to forward any relevant vaccination records that you already have electronically (currently through the use of MS Forms). This will help us run the SVP as efficiently and safely as possible by providing us with information in advance of your arrival in RCSI. This will allow us to determine what your individual needs are for this vaccination programme and plan accordingly.

Do I have to pay for my screening-required immunisations, or are they covered by RCSI?

You must pay for them. A standard vaccination capitation fee, payable by all students, irrespective of past vaccination history or number of attendances required, is charged in your first-year fees.

Information on charges for electives and other items can be found on Mercers Medical Centre website.

<https://www.mercersmedicalcentre.com/rcsi-students/rcsi-student-electives/>

What immunisations are necessary?

Please refer to the main document above for a complete list and instructions.

What should I do if my immunisation records are lost or unavailable?

You could have special blood tests called IgG titers to show immunity. Vaccinations against those diseases to which you are not already immune will be required

Why do I need to have two mumps vaccines?

In response to an outbreak of mumps on several university campuses in previous years, students entering RCSI must have proof of two doses of a mumps vaccine or MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) or proof of immunity through blood testing. This is also recommended as a way to decrease the risk of mumps among the students and others in the community in which they reside.

In my country, a rubella immunisation is required for females only.

Rubella immunity is required for all students. Regardless of your sex, you must have a rubella immunisation or a blood titre that proves immunity.

Will you accept my mother's word that I was immunised for measles, mumps, and rubella?

No. While your parents may be a reliable source of knowledge about your childhood health, we do require medically documented proof of immunity.

What does "documented proof" of immunity mean?

Documented proof is a written record of your immunisation dates provided by school, university, college, or physician's office, and/or results of laboratory blood testing.



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My blood titre was equivocal or borderline. Do I need another immunisation?

Yes, because we cannot accept borderline immunity. You will need another immunisation to boost your immunity.

Do I need the hepatitis B immunisation if I'm married?

Yes. The hepatitis B immunisation is required all newly entering students to primary healthcare qualification programmes, regardless of age, gender, or marital status.

How many shots are there for the hepatitis B immunisation?

Three. The second injection must be administered at least 28 to 60 days after the first injection. The third injection must be administered six months after the first injection.