

Mason City Schools Health Services Information

Should I keep my child home from school?

Especially during the cold and flu season, this is often a difficult question for parents/guardians to answer. Although there are certain guidelines to follow, not all situations fit into the "guideline" categories. The following is an attempt to help you make a decision should your child not feel well.

FEVER: If your child's temperature is 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater, he or she should remain home until he or she has been without fever for a full 24 hours. Remember, fever is a symptom indicating the presence of an illness. Tylenol or Motrin may temporarily reduce the fever, but they do not cure the illness.

CHICKEN POX: A skin rash consisting of small blisters which leave scabs. A slight fever may or may not be present. There may be blisters and scabs all present at the same time. Your child should remain home until all blisters have scabbed over, usually 5-7 days after appearance of the first crop of blisters.

COMMON COLD: Irritated throat, watery discharge from the nose and eyes, sneezing, chilliness, and general body discomfort. Your child should remain home if symptoms are serious enough to interfere with the student's ability to learn. Consult your child's physician if symptoms persist beyond 7-10 days or fever develops.

FLU: Abrupt onset of fever, chills, headache and sore muscles. Runny nose, sore throat, and cough are common. Your child should remain home from school until symptoms are gone and the child is without fever for 24 hours.

HEAD LICE: Lice are small grayish-tan, wingless insects that lay eggs called nits. Nits firmly attach to the hair shafts, close to the scalp. Nits are much easier to see and detect than lice. They are small white specks usually found at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Following lice infestation, your child may return to school after receiving treatment (according to physician's instructions) that includes removal of all nits. Additionally, when the student returns to school, he or she must be examined by the school's Health Services representative prior to entering the classroom.

IMPETIGO: Blister-like lesions which later develop into crusted, pus-like sores. Your child should remain home from school until receiving 48 hours of antibiotic therapy and sores are no longer draining.

PAIN: If your child complains, or behavior indicates, that he or she is experiencing persistent pain, he or she should be evaluated by a physician before attending school.

PINKEYE: Redness and swelling of the membranes of the eye with burning or itching, matter draining from one or both eyes, and/or dried crusts on the eyelids. Your child should remain home from school until seen by a physician. Spread of infection can be minimized by keeping the hands away from the face, good hand washing practices, using individual washcloths and towels, and *not* touching any part of the eyes with tip of the medication applicator while administering antibiotic ointment or eye drops.

SKIN RASHES: Skin rashes of unknown origin should be evaluated by a physician before your child is sent to school. When the doctor approves a return to school, please send physician's note to the clinic with your child.

(OVER)

STREP THROAT / SCARLET FEVER: Strep throat begins with fever, sore/red throat, pus spots on the back of the throat and tender swollen glands of the neck. Scarlet fever shows the same symptoms as strep throat with the addition of a strawberry appearance to the tongue and a skin rash. High fever, nausea, and vomiting may also occur. Your child should remain home from school until 24 hours of antibiotic therapy has been administered and no fever or vomiting has occurred for 24 hours. Most physicians will advise rest at home for 1-2 days after a strep infection.

Antibiotics ordered for strep infections are to be taken for 10 days or until all medication is gone. Only when these directions are followed correctly is the strep bacteria completely eliminated from the body, no matter how well the child feels after the first few days of receiving medication.

VOMITING AND DIARRHEA (INTESTINAL VIRAL INFECTIONS): Stomach ache, cramping, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea, possible fever, headache, and body aches. Your child should remain at home until vomiting, diarrhea, or fever has ceased for a full 24 hours. If your child has any of these symptoms during the night, he or she should not be sent to school the following day.

Note to Parents/Guardians:

In any potential illness situation, good hand washing is always the best first line of defense. Please encourage your child to practice thorough hand washing, particularly before meals and after sneezing or coughing.