

When Should a Child be Kept Home or Sent Home from School for Illness?

Parents often ask when a child should be kept at home or sent home from school or childcare for illness. Here are SIX reasons a child should stay home or be picked up from childcare or school as soon as possible.

- 1. Fever:** If a child has a temperature of 100 degrees F or above (taken by mouth); 101 degrees or above (taken by ear); 99 degrees F or above (taken under the arm). The child should not return until 24 hours of no fever, without use of fever-reducing medications.
- 2. Two loose bowel movements:** even if there are no other signs of illness. The child should have no loose stools for 24 hours prior to returning to school.
Exception: A healthcare provider has determined it is not infectious. This may occasionally be caused by new foods a child has eaten or teething. Call the parent to find out if there is a non-medical reason for the loose bowel movements.
- 3. Vomiting:** Any vomiting is a reason to send a child home or keep a child home.
Exception: babies may spit up following a feeding- this is not vomiting. Motion sickness (from use of play equipment or riding in a car or other vehicle) that goes away after motion stops would not be a reason to send a child home or keep a child home.
- 4. Rash:** Any rash illness and fever should be checked by a health care provider. Any fine red or blotchy rash on the face, trunk or arms and legs is a reason to send a child home or keep a child home. Exclude until the rash subsides or until a healthcare provider has determined it is not infectious. There are different rules for returning to childcare or school depending on the cause of the rash. A child with scarlet fever should be treated with antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to childcare or school. If a health care provider diagnoses a child as having Fifth disease, the child does not need to stay home if s/he feels well.
Exception: Allergic rash and mild diaper rash that are already known to the parent are not reasons to send a child home or keep a child home.
- 5. Crying and complaining for a long time:** Anytime a child is not herself or himself and is complaining about discomforts; or the child is cranky and crying more than usual.
- 6. Injury:** Whenever an injury is serious enough to need a health care provider's attention, a parent should be contacted to take the child home.

Caregivers should:

- Isolate children if they have any of the above symptoms.
- Wash hands well to prevent the spread of disease to caregivers and other children.
- Use a paper towel to turn off faucets and open bathroom doors and then dispose of the paper towel in the wastebasket.
- Encourage parents to keep children home if they are ill.

While not an emergency situation (no need to have the child picked up immediately), children with the following diseases should remain at home until successfully treated: impetigo, lice, pink eye (if bacterial), ringworm, and scabies.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.