

At Home Health Screening Tips: Is Your Child Too Sick for School?

Early in the morning it is often difficult to make a decision about whether or not your child is sick enough to stay home from school. With minor symptoms, you often cannot tell whether he or she is going to get better or worse during the the day.

When you keep your child home, follow school system attendance protocols for parental and physician absence notes.

The main reasons for keeping your child home are:

- Too sick to be comfortable at school.
- He or she might spread a contagious disease to other children.

Children should stay home if he or she has the following symptoms:

- A fever (100.4 or greater orally/tympanic (ear) route or 99.4 or greater (temporal/forehead route); fever symptoms such as chills, body aches, sweating
- Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea
- Sore throat, frequent cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, and/or congestion
- Persistent pain (headache, ear, stomach, muscle, etc.)
- Sudden loss of taste and/or smell
- A widespread rash

Most of these problems need to be discussed with your child's pediatrician to determine if an office visit is needed. Seek immediate medical attention if symptoms are severe. The following guidelines may help in your decision process:

Runny Nose	This is the way many children respond to pollen, dust, or possibly a cold virus. Minor allergy symptoms should not be a reason to miss school. If symptoms are severe or if the mucous has color you may want to call your doctor.
Coughing	If it is persistent during the day, can indicate a worsening of cold or allergy symptoms. It may be a sign of a secondary infection (e.g., sinusitis, pneumonia), which may require medical treatment. It may also indicate mild asthma. If your child's cough is worse than you might expect with a common cold, you need to consult your child's doctor. You should do so immediately if the child is not acting normal, has a fever or has any difficulty breathing.
Headache, Nausea, Diarrhea, Vomiting	A single episode of watery diarrhea probably warrants not going to school. It could be very embarrassing and uncomfortable for your child to have another episode while in school. If diarrhea or vomiting are frequent or are accompanied by fever, rash or general weakness, consult your child's doctor and keep the child out of school for 24 hours with no vomiting, diarrhea or fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
Strep Throat and Scarlet Fever	They usually arrive with a sudden complaint of sore throat, fever and often a stomachache and headache. With scarlet fever, a rash usually appears within 12 to 48 hours. A child with these symptoms should see his doctor for diagnosis and treatment and should remain out of school until he is without fever and has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
Pinkeye/Conjunctivitis	The eye will be reddened and a cloudy or yellow discharge is usually present. The eye may be sensitive to light. Consult with your child's doctor to see if antibiotic eye drops are needed. Again, your child should stay home until symptoms subside and he has been on antibiotic eye drops at least 24 hours or until the doctor recommends your child return to school.
Middle Ear Infections	Your child should see his doctor for diagnosis and treatment and should stay at home if he has fever or pain. This is not contagious to others.
Respiratory Viruses (ex. Flu, RSV, COVID-19)	These are contagious and include symptoms such as body aches, fever, chills, congestion, sore throat and vomiting. Consult your child's doctor for treatment. CDC Respiratory Guidance is to stay home and away from others until both symptoms improve and the child is fever-free for 24 hours. The CDC has ended COVID 19 quarantines.
Impetigo	This is a staph or strep infection that creates a red, oozing blister-like area that can appear anywhere on the body or face. A honey-colored crust may appear on the area. It can be passed to others by direct contact. Consult your child's doctor for treatment and length of time your child should remain out of school, especially if the area cannot be covered.
Widespread Rashes	This may be highly contagious. Consult your child's physician.