WHEN TO KEEP SICK CHILDREN HOME FROM SCHOOL

(Information compiled from CDC (Centers for Disease Control); DOH (Department of Health); OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction)

Deciding when to keep a sick child at home from school is not always easy. It's important for children to attend school and for some parents staying home means missing work. But when a child is truly sick, they need to stay home in the care of an adult to get well and to prevent spreading illness to others. Please keep the school office up to date with current phone numbers so you or an alternate contact can be reached if your child becomes ill or injured at school. The following information may help you decide when to keep your child at home. "Child" refers to all school-aged children including adolescents. This information does not take the place of consulting a medical provider. See below for "When to contact a medical provider".

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMMON COLDS and THE FLU

COMMON COLD Symptoms can last 7 to 14 days. A child with no fever, mild symptoms and otherwise feeling well may be fine at school. Symptoms usually come on gradually.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Fever of 100, Heavy cold symptoms such as deep or uncontrollable coughing or significant lack of energy belongs at home even without a fever.

FLU (INFLUENZA) Highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses and can cause mild to severe illness. A person with influenza can be contagious up to one week after symptoms appear. Children are one of the biggest sources for spreading the flu. Symptoms usually come on quickly.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with flu-like illness (fever, cough, severe aching all over) must stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100°F or higher. If symptoms occur while at school, the student must be picked up as soon as possible to go home. Contact a medical provider with severe symptoms.

COUGH: A mild hacking cough often starts after the first few days of a common cold. A child with mild symptoms, no fever and otherwise feeling well may be fine at school.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with deep or uncontrollable coughing belongs at home even without a fever. A child with cough and fever must stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

DIARRHEA/VOMITING:
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Children who have vomited or had diarrhea should be kept at home and should return to school only after being symptom-free for 24 hours.

EARACHE: Consult a medical provider for earaches. Ear infections may require medical treatment.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child should stay at home if the ear pain is severe.

FEVER: Fevers are a common symptom of viral and bacterial infection. Children are likely to be contagious to others when they have a fever. If there is no thermometer, feel their skin with your hand - if it is much warmer than usual they probably have a fever. Please do not give your child fever reducing medicine and then send them to school. The medicine will wear off, the fever will likely return.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Any child with a fever of 100°F or higher should not attend school and should not return until they have been fever free for 24 hours. A child with flu-like illness (fever and a cough) must stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

FREQUENT SYMPTOMS: Sometimes children pretend or exaggerate illness in order to stay home. However, frequent complaints of tummy aches, headaches and other symptoms may be a physical sign that a child is feeling emotionally stressed, a common experience even in children. Consult a medical provider to evaluate symptoms. Stress-based complaints cause some children to unnecessarily miss a great deal of school. It is important to check often with your children about how things are going. Share concerns with school staff so they can provide support for you and your child to help make attending school a positive experience.

HEADACHES: A child whose only complaint is a mild headache usually does not need to stay home from school. Complaints of frequent or more severe headaches should be evaluated by a medical provider, including vision exam if needed.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with a significant headache belongs at home until feeling better.

IMPETIGO: Contagious bacterial skin infection that usually begins with small fluid filled blisters that cause a honey-colored crust on skin after bursting. It is important to have these symptoms evaluated by a medical provider because untreated infection can lead to serious complications. 24 hours after starting prescribed antibiotics, impetigo is no longer contagious.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Students may attend school if drainage can be effectively kept covered and is not extensive.

PINK EYE (Conjunctivitis) is a common infectious disease of one or both eyes caused by several types of bacteria and viruses. The eye typically appears very red and feels irritated. There may be drainage of mucus and pus or clear liquid. Prescription medication may be needed to treat bacterial infection. Virus-caused pink eye will not need antibiotic treatment.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with the above symptoms should be kept at home until evaluated by a medical provider and return to school after 24 hours of treatment/medication.

RASHES: A rash may be one of the first signs of a contagious childhood illness such as chickenpox. Rashes may cover the entire body or be in only one area and are most contagious in the early stages.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Do not send a child with a rash to school until a medical provider has said it is safe to do so – especially with additional symptoms like itching, fever or appearing ill.

SORE THROAT: A child with a mild sore throat, no fever and otherwise feeling well may be fine to attend school.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Keep a child at home and contact a medical provider for a severe sore throat and if white spots are seen in the back of the throat, with or without a fever.

STREP THROAT: A significantly sore throat could be strep throat, a contagious illness. Other symptoms may include fever, white spots in the back of the throat, headache and upset stomach. Untreated strep throat can lead to serious complications.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Keep your child home from school with the above symptoms and contact a medical provider. A child diagnosed with strep throat is no longer infectious and can return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has been started.

STOMACH PAIN:
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Consult a medical provider and do not send a child to school with a stomach ache that is persistent or severe enough to limit activity. If vomiting or diarrhea occurs, keep the child home until symptom free for 24 hours.

TOOTHACHE: For tooth pain, contact a dentist to have a child evaluated as soon as possible.
WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with a significant toothache should not attend school until feeling better.

WHEN TO CONTACT A MEDICAL PROVIDER:
Be sure to contact a medical provider any time there is concern about a child's health.

In children, emergency warning signs for flu-like illness that need urgent medical attention include:

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Not waking up or interacting
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and worse cough

Other reasons to contact a medical provider include but are not exclusive to:

- When a child looks or acts really sick, with or without a fever

- Cold symptoms for longer than 10-14 days or getting sicker or a there is a fever after the first few days
- Chronic coughing; uncontrollable coughing; wheezing
- Rashes; eye drainage; earache; toothache

HEALTHY HABITS to STAY WELL and PREVENT SPREADING GERMS

- ➢ WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN with soap and water especially after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- ➢ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth to help prevent the spread of viruses.
- ➢ Don't share food, utensils, beverages or anything that might be contaminated with germs.
- ➢ Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- ➢ Stay home when sick, especially with flu-like symptoms of fever and cough. Stay home for at least 24 hours after being fever free without the use of fever reducing medicine.
- ➢ Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- ➢ Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or elbow instead of your hands if you don't have a tissue.
- ➢ Clean surfaces that may be contaminated with germs using household disinfectant cleaners.
- ➢ Get a flu shot every year to help prevent seasonal flu.