

**Sick Kids:**

# When to Stay Home from School

<b>FEVER</b> A temperature of 100° or higher	<b>COUGHING THAT WON'T STOP</b> Or other problems with breathing	<b>DIARRHEA OR VOMITING</b> Within the past 24 hours	<b>RASH</b> Body rash with itching and/or fever	<b>HEAD LICE</b> Itchy head, active head lice	<b>EYE INFECTION</b> Eye is red and oozing a yellow or green discharge
					
<b>When to Return to School</b>					
Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen	Cough is mild and infrequent and evaluated by doctor if needed	Free from diarrhea and/or vomiting for at least 24 hours and evaluated by doctor if needed	Free from rash, itching or fever and evaluated by doctor if needed	After first head lice treatment	24 hours after starting antibiotic eye drops or ointment

# **WHEN TO KEEP SICK CHILDREN HOME FROM SCHOOL**

*Deciding when to keep a sick child home from school is not always easy. Regular school attendance is important 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. Following these guidelines will help keep the school a safe and healthy environment for students and staff.*

*The following information may help you decide when to keep your child at home. **This information does not take the place of consulting a medical provider.***

**General Tips to help keep viruses/illness under control in the school setting include:**

- ***Make sure the school office has a working phone number to contact parents/guardians.***
- ***Please pick up your child promptly if notified, this helps limited exposure to other students and staff.***
- Stress proper hand washing; remind children to wash their hands frequently with soap and water for 15-20 seconds.
- Use hand sanitizer often.
- Cover coughing and sneezing with a tissue (throw away after one use) or elbow not hands.
- Discourage touching of the face, mouth, eyes and nose (this introduces germs into the body).
- Teaching children not to share personal items such as drinks, food and lip balm.
- Keep surfaces such as door knobs, countertops, remote controls, key boards, phones and toys cleaned (at least daily cleaning).
- Do not send a sick child to school if they have had a fever (***100 degrees or higher***) or vomited within the last 24 hours.
- Always make sure to consult your school nurse or doctor if you have any questions.

# COMMON ILLNESSES

**COMMON COLD:** The common cold is a contagious upper respiratory infection caused by cold viruses. Symptoms can last 7 to 14 days. A child with no fever, mild symptoms and otherwise feeling well may be fine at school.

**WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:** A child with severe cold symptoms such as deep or uncontrollable coughing or significant lack of energy belongs at home even without a fever.

**FLU (INFLUENZA):** The flu is a 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.

**WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:** A child with flu-like illness (fever and 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. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100°F or higher. Contact a medical provider with severe symptoms.

**COVID:** A child may return to school when symptoms are improving and no fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications.

**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 a cough and fever should 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.

**RSV:** Respiratory syncytial virus is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious in infants, young children and the elderly. Symptoms include running nose, decreased appetite, coughing, sneezing, fever, and wheezing. Most RSV infections go away on their own within a week or two. **If your child is having difficulty breathing seek health care immediately.**

**WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:** Keep a child home if they have been diagnosed with RSV by a health care provider until he/she has been cleared by the provider to return to school, and is fever-free for at least 24 hours.

**NOROVIRUS:** Often referred to as “**stomach flu**” causes inflammation of the stomach and intestines. This infection causes symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, fatigue and mild fever. Noroviruses are very contagious and can spread quickly especially in the school setting.

**WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:** Keep a sick student home until they eat and drink normally, have had no fever for 24 hours and have not had an episode of vomiting or diarrhea for at least 24 hours.

## VOMITING/DIARRHEA:

**WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:** Vomiting or diarrhea two or more times in the previous 24 hours, unless determined to be caused by a non-communicable condition. Students need to remain at home until no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.

**FEVER:** Fevers are a common symptom of viral and bacterial infection. Children are likely to be contagious to others when they have a fever.

**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 without the use of fever-reducing medicine.**

**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 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.

**IMPETIGO:** A 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 a 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 with or without treatment depending on the diagnosis.

**RASHES:** A rash may be one of the first signs of a contagious childhood illness. 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.

**HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE:** Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by viruses, HFMD is common and occurs mostly in the **summer and fall** but you can get it any time of year. Because it is common and usually mild **children can continue to go to school as long as** they have no fever, have no uncontrolled drooling with mouth sores and feel well enough to participate in classroom activities.

**WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:** Do not send a child to school with a fever, drooling and open draining blisters on hands, feet or mouth.

*This information was compiled from CDC (Centers for Disease Control, 2022, revised 1/2026).*