

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME WITH ILLNESS

Sometimes it can be difficult for a parent to decide whether to send children to school when they wake up with symptoms of an illness or complaints that they do not feel well.

The following are a few situations that warrant keeping the child at home and possibly calling your health care provider:

Fever

- An elevation of body temperature above normal (oral 101) AND accompanied by behavior changes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, rash, sore throat, and/or other signs or symptoms of illness; or is unable to participate.
- Unable to participate in routine activities or needs more care than can be provided by the school staff.
- Should not return until afebrile 24 hours without the aid of antipyretics.

Diarrhea

- Diarrhea is defined as an increased number of stools compared with a child's normal pattern, along with decreased stool form and/or stools that are watery, bloody, or contain mucus.
- Exclude until 24 hours after diarrhea stops or follow specific disease exclusion if the pathogen is known (norovirus, salmonella, etc); or until a medical exam indicates that it is not due to a communicable disease.

Vomiting

- Child has vomited two or more times in the previous 24 hours.
- Exclude for 24 hours after last episode of vomiting, or until child is able to tolerate a meal without vomiting.
- If it is NOT communicable, the family and their clinician will need to discuss how to manage continued vomiting.

Respiratory

- Respiratory infections are common. If the child does not have fever, does not appear to have decreased activity or other symptoms, it is not necessary for the child to stay home.
- Respiratory Hygiene and etiquette should be promoted

Whenever there is an outbreak of a specific contagious infection, the school sends out a notice to alert you to watch out for any symptoms. If your child starts to develop symptoms, it is important that you alert your own health care provider that your child had a possible exposure. Be sure to ask your provider when it is safe for your child to return to school, both for your child's health and for the health of the rest of the school.

Finally, if you know your child is still running a fever, it is not a good idea simply to give them Tylenol and send them onto school because as soon as the medicine wears off, you are apt to get a call from the school nurse to leave work and come to pick up your feverish child. It is better to let them stay home in bed with a fever and take their medications at home until they are off all medicines and ready to learn for a full day in a classroom. If you find a pattern of your child asking to stay home from school, especially if they are falling behind or appear anxious by the thought of attending school, or if there does not appear to be any obvious physical symptoms, it may be a good idea to contact your school nurse and your health care provider to discuss your concerns. Remember, whenever you keep your child home from school, please call the school nurse or attendance office in advance of the start of the school day and leave a message that your child will be absent.

AND TO KEEP THOSE GERMS FROM SPREADING.....

Remind your children to discard used tissues promptly, not to share personal items, to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, to keep their hands away from their face, and to wash hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water.

Nurse: _____

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