

Tips from the School Health Office



WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME WITH ILLNESS DURING COLD AND FLU SEASON

Sometimes it can be difficult for a parent to decide whether to send children to school when they wake up with early symptoms of an illness or complaints that they do not feel well. In general, during cold and flu season, unless your child is significantly ill, the best place for them is in school where they have all already been exposed to the same germs and where they are less likely to expose other more vulnerable people, like the very young or very old, to their routine bouts of cold and flu. Remind and show 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. Suggest that they silently sing the Happy Birthday song twice while washing their hands. However, there are some situations in which it is best to plan on keeping your child home for a day to rest or to arrange for an appointment with your health care provider. The following are a few such situations that warrant watching and possibly conferring with your health care provider:

- Persistent fever greater than 100.4° orally, including a fever that requires control with medication, like Tylenol
- Child is too sleepy or ill from an illness, like vomiting and/or diarrhea, to profit from sitting in class all day
- Significant cough that makes a child feel uncomfortable or disrupts the class
- Sore throat that is severe, accompanied by fever and/or feeling ill, that persists longer than 48 hours, OR after known exposure to a confirmed case of Streptococcal throat infection
- Honey-crusted sores around the nose or mouth or rash on other body parts that might be impetigo; OR a rash in various stages including boils, sores and bumps that may be chicken pox; OR a significant rash accompanied by other symptoms of illness such as fever
- Red, runny eyes that distract the child from learning
- Large amount of discolored nasal discharge, especially if accompanied by facial pain or headache
- Severe ear pain or drainage from the ear
- Severe headache, especially if accompanied by fever
- Any condition that you think may be serious or contagious to others.



WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME WITH ILLNESS DURING COLD AND FLU SEASON, Continued

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 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. If you send your child to school even though you suspect there is significant illness as described above, please call the school nurse to provide her/him with phone numbers where you can be reached that day should your child become more ill and require early dismissal.

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 the dreaded 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's 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.

A Letter from the School Health Office



Conjunctivitis - This is commonly known as pink eye.

Please watch your child for the following symptoms. Conjunctivitis can be bacterial, viral or allergic, so it is very important that, if your child has the symptoms below, you should call your child's healthcare provider for guidance.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Irritated swollen eyes or eyelids
- Itching of the eyes
- Excessive tears
- Blurred vision that clears with blinking
- Green or yellow discharge
- Painful dried or crusted discharge on the eyelids

Pink eye can be contagious and it is best controlled by diligent hand washing.

It is important to discuss conjunctivitis with your child's healthcare provider as treatment may be different based on the source of the conjunctivitis (bacterial, viral or allergic). Your child may need to be excluded from school and this decision is made by your child's healthcare provider.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.



A Letter from the School Health Office

Strep throat - The symptoms will usually appear 2-5 days after exposure.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Throat pain
- Difficulty swallowing
- Red and swollen tonsils, sometimes with white patches or streaks of pus
- Tiny red spots on the soft or hard palate — the area at the back of the roof of the mouth
- Swollen, tender lymph glands (nodes) in your neck
- Fever
- Headache
- Rash
- Stomachache and sometimes vomiting, especially in younger children

For accurate diagnosis, a throat culture needs to be taken. Symptoms generally occur 2-3 days before a culture will show positive results. Following a culture being taken, your child should remain at home until you know the results. If medication is prescribed for strep throat, your child needs to be on the medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.



A Letter from the School Health Office

Impetigo

Please watch your child for the following symptoms. If your child has the symptoms below, please call your child's healthcare provider for guidance.

Symptoms usually appear 4 - 10 days after exposure.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Itchy rash
- Red sores that blister, then ooze
- The sores may grow in size and spread
- When blisters break, they form a flat, honey-colored crust

Impetigo is contagious and diligent hand washing is advised. If you suspect impetigo, your student needs to be seen by your healthcare provider. If your student is diagnosed with impetigo, he/she should not return to school until under treatment for 24 hours or until lesions are dry.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.

A Letter from the School Health Office



Head lice

The entire class has had their heads checked for the presence of lice and students were referred for treatment as needed.

Please watch your child for the following symptoms:

- Please inspect your child's head for the possibility of head lice. Look for small silvery nits fixed to the hair shaft, similar in appearance to dandruff, but not easily removed.
- Where nits have hatched, live lice may be seen.
- If nits or lice are found, please call your healthcare provider regarding appropriate treatment. Your child should stay home from school until they have been treated.
- Follow the directions for any medication carefully. Cream rinse and conditioners can decrease the effectiveness of the treatment.

During the school year, it is a good idea to check you child's head weekly, or when he or she complains of having an "itchy" scalp. Talk to your child and remind him or her not to share or borrow combs, brushes, hats or scarves.

Please notify the School Health Office at the number below if your child is diagnosed with head lice.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.

A Letter from the School Health Office



Fifth Disease is a viral infection that occurs most often in elementary school-age children.

Symptoms usually appear 1 – 2 weeks after exposure.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Low grade fever and tiredness
- Appearance of a lacy rash on the cheeks which gives a “slapped face” appearance
 - Rash may extend to the rest of the body appearing and disappearing in response to environmental changes (e.g., sunlight)
 - Rash may be “itchy”
- Some children have no symptoms at all

Fifth disease appears to be contagious during the week prior to the appearance of the rash. It is not necessary to exclude students from school once the rash has appeared.

NOTE: Pregnant women and those with chronic red blood cell disorders (e.g., Sickle Cell disease) should contact their healthcare provider if exposed to Fifth disease).

Please call the school’s Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.



A Letter from the School Health Office

Chickenpox (varicella zoster)

Please watch your child for the following symptoms. If your child has the symptoms below, please call your child's healthcare provider for guidance.

Symptoms usually appear 14-16 days after exposure.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Slight fever, feels tired and weak
- May report a stomach ache
- Itchy, blistered rash that first appears on the trunk (stomach and back) and spreads to the face, arms and legs
 - The rash appears to be small water blisters.

In a day or two, the rash will form crusts that will remain for a few days. As the blisters spread, some will be healing as new ones appear. Your child needs to remain home from school until all the blisters are crusted over (your child is contagious until that time).

Please notify the School Health Office at the number below if your child becomes ill with chicken pox.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.

A Letter from the School Health Office



Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackie Virus)

Please watch your child for the symptoms listed below. If your child has the following symptoms, please call your child's healthcare provider for guidance.

Symptoms usually appear 3 – 5 days after exposure.

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Fever
- Poor appetite
- Runny Nose
- Sore Throat
- A blister-like rash on the hands, feet and in the mouth usually develops one to two days after the initial symptoms

Children with a rash and a fever should not attend school.

Hand Foot and Mouth disease is be contagious and it is best controlled by diligent hand washing.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.