



**ILLNESS POLICY - HOW SICK IS TOO SICK?  
WHEN TO KEEP YOUR CHILD AT HOME  
FROM SCHOOL OR CHILD CARE**

Children's Hospital Colorado

**There are three main reasons to keep sick children at home:**

1. The child doesn't feel well enough to take part in normal activities, (such as; overly tired, fussy or won't stop crying).
2. The child needs more care than teachers and staff can give, and still care for the other children.
3. The illness is on this list and staying home is recommended.

**And remember, the best way to prevent the spread of infection is through good hand washing.**

**Children with the following symptoms or illness should be kept home (excluded) from school:**

| SYMPTOMS  | Child Must Be at Home?  |
|---|---|
| <p><b>DIARRHEA</b><br/>frequent, loose or watery stools compared to child's normal ones that are not caused by food or medicine</p>   | <p><b>Yes</b> - if child looks or acts sick; if child has diarrhea with fever and isn't acting normally; if child has diarrhea with vomiting; if child has diarrhea that overflows the diaper or the toilet</p> |
| <p><b>FEVER</b> with behavior change or other illness<br/>A fever of 100°F or above in babies 4 months or younger needs immediate medical attention.</p>                    | <p><b>Yes, when</b> the child also has a rash, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, behavior changes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, etc.</p>  |
| <p><b>"FLU-LIKE" SYMPTOMS</b><br/>Fever over 100°F with a cough or sore throat. Other flu symptoms can include tiredness, body aches, vomiting and diarrhea</p>             | <p><b>Yes</b> - for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone, without the use of medicine that reduces the fever</p>   |
| <p><b>COUGHING</b><br/><u>Note:</u> Children with asthma may go to school with a written health care plan and the school is allowed to give them medicine and treatment</p> | <p><b>Yes</b> - if severe, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, rapid or difficulty breathing and medical attention is necessary</p>  |
| <p><b>Mild RESPIRATORY OR COLD SYMPTOMS</b><br/>stuffy nose with clear drainage, sneezing, mild cough</p>   | <p><b>No</b> - may attend if able to take part in school activities<br/><i>Keep home if symptoms are severe. This includes fever and the child is not acting normally and/or has trouble breathing.</i></p>     |
| <p><b>RASH WITH FEVER</b><br/><u>Note:</u> Body rash without fever or behavior changes usually does not need to stay home from school, call the doctor</p>                  | <p><b>Yes</b> – call the doctor. Any rash that spreads quickly, has open, weeping wounds and/or is not healing should be evaluated</p>  |
| <p><b>VOMITING</b><br/>Throwing up two or more times in the past 24 hrs</p>   | <p><b>Yes</b> - until vomiting stops or a doctor says it is not contagious. If the child has a recent head injury watch for other signs of illness and for dehydration</p>                                      |

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| ILLNESS  | Child Must Be at Home?   |
|--|--|
| <b>CHICKEN POX</b>   | <b>Yes</b> - until blisters have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)  |
| <b>CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINK EYE)</b><br>pink color of eye <i>and</i> thick yellow/green discharge  | <b>No (bacterial or viral)</b> – children don't need to stay home unless the child has a fever or behavioral changes. Call the doctor for diagnosis and possible treatment.  |
| <b>CROUP (SEE COUGHING)</b><br><u>Note:</u> May not need to stay home unless child is not well enough to take part in usual activities | Seek medical advice  |
| <b>FIFTH'S DISEASE</b>   | <b>No</b> - child is no longer contagious once rash appears  |
| <b>HAND FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE</b> (Coxsackie virus)   | <b>No</b> - unless the child has mouth sores, is drooling and isn't able to take part in usual activities  |
| <b>HEAD LICE OR SCABIES</b>  | <b>Yes</b> - from end of the school day until after first treatment.   |
| <b>HEPATITIS A</b>   | <b>Yes</b> - until 1 week after the start of the illness and when able to take part in usual activities  |
| <b>HERPES</b>  | <b>No, unless</b> - the child has open sores that cannot be covered or is drooling uncontrollably  |
| <b>IMPETIGO</b>  | <b>Yes</b> - for 24 hours after starting antibiotics   |
| <b>RINGWORM</b>  | <b>Yes</b> - from end of school until after starting treatment<br>Keep area covered for the first 2 days   |
| <b>ROSEOLA</b>   | <b>Yes</b> – if the child has a fever and rash, call the doctor  |
| <b>RSV</b> (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)   | Staying home isn't necessary, but is recommended when a child is not well enough to take part in usual activities and/or is experiencing acute respiratory symptoms. Call the doctor. RSV spreads quickly through classrooms |
| <b>STREP THROAT</b>  | <b>Yes</b> - for 24 hours after starting antibiotics and the child is able to take part in usual activities  |
| <b>VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES</b> Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German Measles), Pertussis (Whooping Cough)                               | <b>Yes</b> – the doctor says the child is no longer contagious   |
| <b>YEAST INFECTIONS</b><br>including thrush or Candida diaper rash   | <b>No</b> - follow good hand washing and hygiene practices   |

References

- American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs. 3rd edition. Elk Grove Village, IL.
- American Academy of Pediatrics, *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Elk Grove Village, IL 2013.
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Communicable Disease Epidemiology Program, *Infectious Disease in Child Care Settings: Guidelines for Schools and Child Care Providers*, Denver, CO, October 2013.