

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 early symptoms of an illness or complaints that they do not feel well. 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:

1. Persistent fever greater than 100.4° orally, including a fever that requires control with medication, like Tylenol
2. Child is too sleepy or ill to profit from sitting in class all day
3. Child is vomiting or has diarrhea.
4. Significant cough that makes a child feel uncomfortable or disrupts the class
5. 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
6. 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
7. Red, runny eyes that distract the child from learning
8. Large amount of discolored nasal discharge, especially if accompanied by facial pain or headache
9. Severe ear pain or drainage from the ear
10. Severe headache, especially if accompanied by fever
11. Any condition that you think may be serious or contagious to others.

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 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.