

TOO SICK FOR SCHOOL?

Colds and illnesses attack everyone. You don't want your child to miss school, but neither do you want to send a sick child to school and harm him or her and other children as well. When should your child stay home from school? Here are a few guidelines:

A **runny nose** is the way many children respond to pollen, dust, chalk, or simply a change of season. If it isn't a common cold, then it's an allergy, and allergies aren't contagious. A child does not need to stay home.

A **bad cough or cold symptoms** can indicate a severe cold, bronchitis, flu or even pneumonia. If your child is not acting "right," has difficulty breathing, or is becoming dehydrated, it could be serious. Keep your child home so he/she can rest. Give him/her plenty of fluids, treat fevers, and encourage hand washing by all. Check with your doctor.

Diarrhea and vomiting makes children feel very uncomfortable, and being near a bathroom becomes top priority. If your child has more than one loose stool, or throws up more than once, accompanied by fever, rash or general weakness, keep your child out of school until the illness passes. A single episode of diarrhea or even vomiting, unaccompanied by other symptoms may not be reason enough for a child to miss school. BUT< please make sure the school can reach you during the day if necessary.

***Fever** is an important symptom. When it occurs along with a sore throat, earache, nausea, listlessness, or a rash, your child may be carrying something very contagious. Most doctors advise parents to keep children home during the course of the fever, and for an additional 24 hours after the fever has ended.

***Ear infections** are not easily spread, but if not properly treated, can cause hearing damage. Your child should be kept out of school for 24 hours after the fever has ended, and antibiotic treatment has started.

***Strep throat and scarlet fever** are two highly contagious conditions caused by a streptococcal (bacterial) infection. A very painful sore throat, making it hard to swallow, with high fever are possible signs. Some 12 to 48 hours after the beginning of scarlet fever, a rash will appear. A child with either strep throat or scarlet fever should be kept home and treated with antibiotics. After 24 hours on an antibiotic, a child is usually no longer contagious, and may return to school when feeling better.

***Chicken Pox** a viral disease, is not life threatening to children, but is very uncomfortable and very contagious. If your child has a fever, is itching, and begins to sprout pink or red spots (with fluid filled centers) on the back, chest, and face, chances are its chicken pox. Please call school to let us know and keep your child home until all the pox have crusted over to form scabs.

***Fifth disease** is a mild viral infection, usually characterized by bright red cheeks, followed by lacy red rash on the neck, trunk, arms and legs. Persons with the virus may experience a low-grade fever and tiredness, but may not feel ill at all. Once the rash is evident, they are beyond the contagious period, and are free to be in school if not running a fever.

***Conjunctivitis or pink eye** is highly contagious and uncomfortable, so take heed when your child complains of an eye or eyes burning, itching, and producing a whitish discharge. Cases, whether viral or bacterial, may require treatment with prescription eye drops. It is best to keep your child home until your doctor says it's all right to return to school.

***Lice and mites**, once brought into the home or school, can quickly produce an epidemic of itching and scratching. Mites are tiny insects that irritate the skin and cause scabies. Lice are small insects that thrive on the scalp of humans. Caution your child against sharing combs, brushes or hats. In addition to seeking treatment, please inform the school, so other classmates can be checked.