



WHEN TO KEEP SICK CHILDREN HOME FROM SCHOOL

Information compiled from CDC (Centers for Disease Control) and DC DOH (DC Department of Health)

Deciding when to keep a sick child at home from school is not always easy. It's important for children to attend school and for some parents, their child staying home means missing work. But when a children are truly sick, they need to stay home in the care of an adult to get well and to prevent spreading illness to others.

The following information may help you decide when to keep your child at home.

| DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE COMMON COLD and THE FLU | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| COMMON COLD | | FLU (INFLUENZA) | |
| <p>The common cold is a contagious upper respiratory infection caused by cold viruses. It is the most frequent childhood illness, and symptoms can last 7 to 14 days. A child with no fever, mild symptoms and otherwise feeling well may be fine at school.</p> <p><u>WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL</u> A child with heavy cold symptoms such as deep or uncontrollable coughing or significant lack of energy should stay home even without a fever.</p> | | <p>The flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses and can cause mild to severe illness. A person with influenza can be contagious up to one week after symptoms appear.</p> <p><u>WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL</u> A child with flu-like illness (fever and cough) must stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100°F or higher.</p> | |
| Symptoms | Usually come on gradually | Symptoms | Usually come on quickly |
| Fever | Rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102°F in infants and small children | Fever | Typically as high as 102°F, but can rise to 104°F and usually lasts 3 to 4 days |
| Cough | Mild, hacking cough | Cough | Often, can be severe |
| Headache | Rare | Headache | Sudden onset, can be severe |
| Muscle aches | Mild | Muscle aches | Usual, can be severe |
| Tiredness/weakness | Mild | Tiredness/weakness | Can last 2 or more weeks |
| Extreme exhaustion | Never | Extreme exhaustion | Sudden onset, can be severe |
| Vomiting/diarrhea | Never | Vomiting/diarrhea | Sometimes |
| Runny nose | Often | Runny nose | Sometimes |
| Sneezing | Often | Sneezing | Sometimes |
| Sore throat | Often | Sore throat | Sometimes |

COUGH: A mild hacking cough often starts after the first few days of a common cold. A child with mild symptoms, no fever, and otherwise feeling well may be fine at school.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with deep or uncontrollable coughing belongs at home even without a fever. Children with cough and fever must stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

DIARRHEA/VOMITING:

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Children who have vomited or have had diarrhea should be kept at home and should return to school only after being symptom-free for 24 hours.

FEVER: Fevers are a common symptom of viral and bacterial infection. Children are likely to be contagious to others when they have a fever. Please do not give your child fever-reducing medicine and then send him or her to school. The medicine will wear off, the fever will probably return and you will need to pick up your child anyway.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Children with a fever of 100°F or higher should not attend school and should not return until they have been fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

HEADACHES: A child whose only complaint is a mild headache usually does not need to stay home from school. Complaints of frequent or more severe headaches should be evaluated by a medical provider, including a vision exam if needed.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with a significant headache belongs at home until feeling better.

HEAD LICE: Head lice are tiny insects that live only on human scalps and hair. They do not cause illness nor do they carry disease. An itchy scalp is the most common symptom. The most effective steps for getting rid of lice are pediculicide treatment and daily nit removal for at least 14 days using a special nit comb.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with head lice can return to school once treatment has begun.

PINK EYE (Conjunctivitis): A common infectious disease of one or both eyes caused by several types of bacteria and viruses. The eye typically appears very red and feels irritated. There may be drainage of mucous and pus or clear liquid. Prescription medication may be needed to treat a bacterial infection. Virus-caused pink eye will not need antibiotic treatment.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: A child with bacterial or viral conjunctivitis should not attend school until symptoms resolve or until 24 hours after treatment has begun.

STREP THROAT: A significantly sore throat could be strep throat, a highly contagious illness. Other symptoms may include fever, white spots in the back of the throat, headache and upset stomach. Untreated strep throat can lead to serious complications.

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Keep your child home from school with the above symptoms and contact a medical provider. A child must be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school.

STOMACH PAIN:

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL: Consult a medical provider and do not send a child to school with a stomachache that is persistent or severe enough to limit activity. If vomiting or diarrhea occurs, keep the child home until symptom free for 24 hours.