

NCSU GUIDELINES FOR WHEN TO KEEP CHILDREN HOME FROM SCHOOL

Attendance in school supports social, emotional and educational development, but children need to be healthy in order to learn and to be safe. School success is promoted when children are ready and able to learn. Children who are not feeling well are at greater risk for accidents and injury. Avoiding illness -- enough rest, nutrition, hydration, and "down-time" -- is essential for health. In order to help parents support the health and the well-being of their own children and the school community, the following guidelines are offered to help you make decisions about when to keep your child home and when they may return.

FEVER:

Elevated temperature, >100.4 F, is a sign that a child is ill and could be contagious. A child with fever needs rest and fluids and must stay home. Children must stay home 24 hours past the **first normal temperature** (without fever reducing medication such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen) before returning to school, and feel well enough to fully participate in the program.

RASH:

A child with skin rash (and you don't know where it came from) accompanied by one or more of the following: fever, behavior changes, joint pain, bruising without injury or is open/oozing needs to remain home. Contacting a physician is recommended with rash illnesses in school age children as they may be a symptom of a communicable illness. A note clearing the child to return is required from the provider after evaluation for a rash related illness.

VOMITING:

A child who has been vomiting may return to school when they are 24 hours without vomiting or fever, free of abdominal pain, and are eating normally. Students with a known reason for vomiting (chronic, noncommunicable illness) should have a letter submitted by their health care provider exempting them from this standard. Schools do not send students home for episodic vomiting resulting from anxiety (that has resolved), motion sickness or similar events. School nurses will use discretion and dismiss students when it is evident the issue is not resolving.

DIARRHEA:

If your child has two or more loose or watery stools for unknown reasons, they need to stay home. They may return once they are eating normally and have no abdominal pain, diarrhea or fever for 24 hours.

SORE THROAT/COUGHS:

Sore throats with fever, inability to swallow, drooling or noisy breathing need medical evaluation. Fever is not necessary for strep throat and often strep is accompanied by any combination of sore throat, headache, stomachache, "strawberry tongue" and a rash may, or may not, be present.

A child with a continuous cough that would be disruptive to the learning process should remain home. A cough can be a symptom of a variety of medical conditions and, if continuous, should be evaluated by a physician. A continuous cough in asthmatic children must be evaluated for worsening of asthma and possible need for additional medication coverage.

PINK EYE:

Children with crusty, weepy (copious amounts of white or yellow discharge), red eyes, that might be signs of conjunctivitis, need to stay home. Use warm moist compresses for 24 hours, if the symptoms have not resolved contact your primary care provider. If diagnosed with bacterial conjunctivitis the student will need to be on antibiotics for 24 hours and have no yellow or white discharge coming from his/her eye(s). If symptoms develop during the school day but the drainage is clear or not copious the student will remain at school unless they are unable to access their education due to discomfort. Frequent hand washing is encouraged. Providers advise that most cases of conjunctivitis are viral and do not require treatment.

DISPOSITION/APPEARANCE:

A child who appears unusually lethargic, tired, pale, or has decreased appetite, unusual inexplicable irritability, or "just isn't themselves" may need to have a day of rest at home.

KEEP IN MIND

- When antibiotics are prescribed your child must complete a **full 24 hours of doses** before returning to school. They must also be fever-free (without fever reducing medications) and well enough to participate in the entire school day.
- If your child has breathing difficulty, wheezing, or if nebulizer treatments have been administered within the last 12 hours, the child needs to remain home until symptom free. A physician should be contacted any time there is an increase in asthma symptoms. Notify the school nurse of any worsening of asthma.
- Constant abdominal pain (continuing more than 2 hours) or “off and on” pain associated with a fever requires contacting a physician and resting at home.
- A child with a need for more care than is appropriate for the school health office or classroom, or an illness that could harm the health and safety of other students, requires the child to remain home.
- When a child has any condition or injury that would prevent them from participating comfortably and safely in the school program and activities they should remain home.
- Always call the school nurse when your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness, has had an injury, prescribed medication, scheduled surgery or procedure or requires help or changes to the program due to health concerns.
- Routine lice checks are the responsibility of the parents and should be done on a regular schedule to make sure that your child comes to school free of lice.

Thank you for supporting the school community by helping to create a safe environment that promotes student success and assures our students are ready and able to learn.