

Guidelines for Keeping a Sick Child at Home

Should I keep my child home or send him or her to school?

Please keep your child home if he or she has had any of the following in the past 24 hours:

- fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- vomiting
- diarrhea more than one time
- Has symptoms that prevent him or her from participating in school, such as:
 - Excessive tiredness or lack of appetite
 - Productive coughing, sneezing
 - Headache, body aches, earache
 - Sore throat

A minor sore throat is usually not a problem, but a severe sore throat could be strep throat even if there is no fever. Other symptoms of strep throat include headache and stomach upset. Contact your pediatrician for a test to determine if it is strep throat.

Keep your child home until his or her fever has been gone for 24 hours without medication. Colds can be contagious for at least 48 hours. Returning to school too soon may slow recovery and expose others unnecessarily.

Does my child have the flu?

The flu is serious! Call your pediatrician at the first sign of flu symptoms, which typically come on suddenly, including:

- High fever
- Chills
- Headache, body aches, earache
- Nausea, vomiting
- Dry cough

If you're unsure about the best way to treat your child's cold or flu, ask your school nurse, doctor, or pharmacist.

How do I make my child feel better?

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and put limits on TV watching
- Encourage fluids like water, soup, juice and ice
- Help your child relax by reading him a story and giving him plenty of TLC
- Used as directed, children's cough and cold medicines help relieve cough and cold symptoms while your child is getting better. Read the directions carefully and give the exact recommended dose for the child's age. Do not use over the counter cough and cold medications for children under age four.

How can I prevent my child from getting a cold?

- Teach your child to wash his or her hands frequently using plenty of soap and warm water. Proper hand-washing should take about 20 seconds or the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice
- Teach your child to cover coughs and sneezes with their sleeve
- Keep the child's environment tobacco free
- Try to minimize the time your child spends with other children who have cough or cold symptoms
- Keep an annual well-child exam to follow changes in your child's health
- Keep your child's immunizations up-to-date (CDC guidelines recommend a flu vaccine for most children)
- Serve a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables.
- After your child is feeling better, clean all surfaces; wash the bedding and air out the room
- Keep surfaces like doorknobs, phones, remote controls, toys, and keyboards clean
- Always make sure to consult your school nurse or doctor if you have any questions