

## When to Keep Your Child Home from School A Parent's Guide

It is sometimes difficult to make the decision about whether or not your child is sick enough to stay home from school. With minor symptoms early in the morning, you cannot predict if s/he will feel better or worse during the course of the day. The guidelines below may be of help when you're trying to decide what's best to do.

**The main reasons for keeping your child home are:**

- ◆ If she/he is too sick to be comfortable at school or participate in activities
- ◆ If she/he might spread a contagious disease to other children

A child **should** stay home if there is:

- Fever of 100° or more
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Frequent Cough
- Persistent pain (ear, stomach, throat, head)
- Widespread rash

(Any of these problems may require a call to your child's doctor)

**Fever**—(100° or higher) means the body is doing its job to fight an infection, and your child may have a contagious illness that could be spread to others. While you can treat the fever, and usually help your child feel better temporarily, the cause of the fever (and the risk of passing the illness on to others) is still there. **Children should be fever-free for 24 hours (without taking Tylenol, Motrin, etc.) before returning to school.**

**Coughing**—while minor cold symptoms are not a reason to miss school, a persistent cough may be a sign of a secondary infection which requires medical treatment. A constant cough might also indicate mild asthma or allergies. **Children should be taught to cough into their sleeve or upper arm. This greatly reduces the spread of germs sprayed into the air or onto hands.**

**Diarrhea and Vomiting**—having an upset tummy is very uncomfortable and makes it hard to concentrate, not to mention the possible embarrassment if there's an episode at school with soiled clothing. **Children should be symptom-free for 24 hours and be able to hold down food and liquids before returning to school.**

**Pinkeye or conjunctivitis**—the eye is reddened and itchy with a greenish-yellow discharge (often the eye is "stuck together" with crusty drainage when waking up in the morning). The cause can be bacterial or viral and is very contagious. A call should be made to the doctor to see if antibiotic drops are needed—most children get better after 5 or 6 days without antibiotics. Sometimes reddened, itchy eyes are due to allergies, and a note from the doctor indicating allergies is helpful to the health room and school. **Exclusion from school is not required, but it is important to teach good hand washing and not to touch or rub eyes. Seek medical care if not improved in 5 days.**

**Skin Infections**—a red, oozing blister-like rash or a red, swollen area (boil or rising) *could* be a staph or strep infection which may need antibiotic treatment. These bacterial infections are often very contagious, so your child should be seen by your health care provider. **Children should stay home from school (or sports practice) until treatment has begun AND if there is a draining lesion that cannot be covered.**