

When to Keep Your Child Home from School Due to Illness

Knowing whether a child is well enough to go to school can be tough for all families. The decision depends not only on whether a child is well enough to participate at school, but also, with a contagion of COVID-19, extra caution must be taken to ensure the safety of your child and others.

1. When in doubt, check in with the school, school health clinic or your health care provider first. For example, children with COVID-19 may not show any overt symptoms, what may look like “just allergies” could actually be COVID-19 symptoms. Additionally, children with other illnesses such as strep throat may need a dose or two of antibiotics first, which can mean staying home the day after diagnosis (or possibly longer).
2. Children diagnosed with COVID-19 MUST remain at home until released by a physician or the local Health Department.
3. Children quarantining because someone in their household has tested positive for COVID-19 should not return to school until a medical professional has said they can return to school or 10 days after the individual with COVID-19 has been released by a medical professional.
4. Children should stay home if they are experiencing diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, a fever (temperature of 100.4°F or greater), chills, sore throat, new uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing or new onset of severe headache.
5. A fever with no other symptoms is reason enough for a child to stay home. You should keep your child home from school anytime they have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher. A child should not return to school until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medicines. Each child’s “normal” temperature will vary – as with adults, normal temperatures fall within a range – please work with your health care provider to determine your child’s normal range.
6. If a child develops a fever at school, they will be sent home and cannot return until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines. This means that a child who spikes a fever at school CANNOT return the following day.
7. Kids with colds, coughs, or pinkeye can go to school if they feel well enough and do not have a fever, as long as they have been seen by a physician and COVID-19 has been ruled out.
8. Children who lose their appetite, are clingy or lethargic, complain of pain, are drooling with mouth sores, or who just do not seem like themselves should not come to school.
9. Chickenpox sores should be dry and crusted over before kids go back to school (usually this takes about six days). Other contagious infections — like rubella, whooping cough, mumps, measles, and hepatitis A — have specific guidelines for returning to school. Your medical provider will advise you how long they should stay home.
10. Lice, scabies, and ringworm should not keep kids out of school. If the problem is found by the teacher or school nurse, the child should stay in school until the end of the day. Children who get their first treatment after school should be able to return to the classroom the next morning.

