

TOO SICK FOR SCHOOL?

The weather is getting cooler and before you know it winter will be here. That means colds and other illnesses. You don't want your child to miss too much school, but you also don't want to expose your child's peers to a sick child. When should your child stay home from school? Here are a few guidelines you might consider:

COLD SYMPTOMS: such as a stuffy or runny nose, scratchy throat, and fatigue should not be a reason to stay home from school. If these symptoms persist or are associated with a frequent cough, fever, or difficulty breathing, the child should stay home and a visit to the doctor is indicated.

FEVER: is an important symptom if it occurs with a sore throat, earache, nausea, listlessness, or a rash. Your child may have a contagious illness and your doctor should be consulted. Most doctors advise parents to keep a child home for **24 hours** after the fever has passed.

VOMITING AND DIARRHEA: is a discomfort that should be managed at home. It is important to keep your child hydrated with fluids during this illness. These symptoms may indicate a viral illness and generally pass without medical intervention. If accompanied by a fever or rash, or symptoms persist over 24 hours, your doctor should be consulted. Please do not send your child to school until your child is symptom free for 24 hours.

STREP THROAT and SCARLET FEVER: are two contagious illnesses caused by the streptococcal bacteria. It usually starts with a sore throat and high fever. Sometimes 12-48 hours after the onset of the sore throat, a rash might appear; this is scarlet fever. A child with strep throat or scarlet fever should be kept home and treated with antibiotics. Once treated for **24-48 hours** with an antibiotic, a child is usually no longer contagious, and may return to school if feeling well enough.

* Please contact the school if you would like some more information on these or other illnesses.

CHICKEN POX (Varicella): a viral disease, which is very uncomfortable and contagious. If your child develops a fever, complains of itchiness, and breaks out in a pink or red rash with fluid filled centers on the back, chest, and/or face, it may be chicken pox. Incubation time is two to three weeks, usually 13 to 17 days. Your doctor should be consulted immediately upon onset of symptoms. Your child needs to be kept at home until all spots are scabbed over, usually at least a week or more from the onset of symptoms. Please notify the school if your child comes down with chicken pox so that we can be watchful for symptoms in other children.

CONJUNCTIVITIS (Pink eye): this is highly contagious and uncomfortable. If your child complains of eyes that are burning, itching, or draining, please visit your doctor. This problem requires a prescription eye ointment or drops. Your child may return to school after a full **24 hours** of treatment.

EAR INFECTIONS: Often occurs with cold symptoms but not always. Unless treated promptly, permanent hearing loss may occur. Again, a child may return to school if fever free and on an antibiotic therapy for at least **24 hours**.

NITS OR HEADLICE: Once brought into a home or school may quickly produce an epidemic of itching and scratching. Headlice are tiny parasites that thrive on human scalps. Nits are eggs laid by the louse. Advise your child NOT to share combs, brushes, hats, etc. If your child becomes a "host" to nits and lice, it is extremely important to notify the school. This effort will help control the spread of the problem. Your child may return to school after proof is provided to the school of treatment for the headlice/nits. Please check with your doctor or school nurse-teacher for the most effective way to treat your family and disinfect clothing, bedding, and your home environment. Please be assured this is a very common childhood problem. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** You can contact the school if you would like further information on headlice.