

A Note from the School Nurse

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Cold and flu season is here and we are seeing its effects in our school. Deciding when to keep your child home from school is not always easy. It's important for children to attend school and for some parents staying home with a sick child means missing work. When a child is truly sick, the best place for them is at home in the care of an adult. This will allow them the necessary time to get well and it will also prevent the spread of the illness to others.

The following information compiled from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) may help you decide when to keep your child at home. The school Nurse also uses these guidelines to determine when you will be called to pick your child up from school. This information applies to all school-aged children including adolescents. It is not intended to be inclusive of all illnesses or conditions that may indicate the need for your child to stay home from school. **This information does not take the place of a consultation with your medical provider.**

Fever: A fever is defined as a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or higher. Fevers are a symptoms of a viral or bacterial infection. Children are likely to be contagious to others when they have a fever. If you do not have a thermometer and your child feels warm to your touch, they probably have a fever. Please do not give your child fever reducing medicine and then send them to school. The medicine will wear off, the fever will probably return and you would need to pick them up anyway.

Keep your child home with a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or higher and do not return until they are fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Common Cold: The common cold is a contagious upper respiratory infection caused by cold viruses. It is the most frequent childhood illness. Symptoms can last 7-14 days. A child with no fever, mild symptoms and otherwise feeling well, may be fine at school.

Keep you child home with cold symptoms such as a deep or uncontrollable cough or significant lack of energy with or without a fever.

Flu (Influenza): The flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza virus and can cause mild to severe illness. A person with influenza can be contagious up to one week after symptoms appear. Children are one of the biggest sources for spreading the flu.

Keep your child home with flu-like illness (fever and cough) for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (aches, fatigue, chills), without the use of fever-reducing medicine. If symptoms occur while at school, the student must be picked up as soon as possible to go home. Contact a medical provider with severe symptoms.

Cough: A mild hacking cough often starts after the first few days of a common cold. A child with mild symptoms, no fever, and otherwise feeling well, may be fine at school.

Keep your child home with a deep or uncontrollable cough with or without a fever.

Sore Throat: A child with a mild sore throat, no fever and otherwise feeling well, may be fine to attend school. A significantly sore throat could be strep throat, a contagious illness. Other symptoms may include fever, headache, and/or upset stomach. Untreated strep throat can lead to serious complications.

Keep your child home with a severe sore throat, contact your medical provider if they also have a fever, headache, or upset stomach as this could indicate strep throat. Children diagnosed with strep throat are no longer infectious and can return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has been started.

Diarrhea/Vomiting: Vomiting and diarrhea are usually caused by a stomach virus. It is often called the “stomach flu” even though it is not caused by the influenza virus. Vomiting may last for 12-24 hours and diarrhea may take several days to completely resolve.

Keep your child home if they have vomited twice within 24 hours or have had three or more watery stools in 24 hours. Children should not return to school until being symptom free for 24 hours. Consult your medical provider if your child also has a stomachache that is persistent or severe enough to limit activity.

Everyday good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent the spread of illnesses like the flu. Here are some tips from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.
- Stay home from school, work, and running errands, when you are sick. You will limit exposing others to your illness.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash your hands often. This will help protect you from germs. If soap and water are not available use an alcohol based hand rub.

If there are any questions please contact me at the phone number or email address listed below.

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