

# Information for Parents from the School Health Office

## When to keep a child home when they are sick?

Sometimes it can be hard to decide whether to send your child to school or keep them home if they are showing symptoms of an illness or complains they do not feel well. **Our school policy is that if your child has the following signs or symptoms you need to keep them home from school.** These symptoms may also warrant you to call your health care provider for further recommendations.

1. Fever over 100.0 in the past 24 hours. **(Your child must be fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours before returning to school)**
2. Vomiting in the past 24 hours
3. Diarrhea in the past 24 hours
4. Large amounts of white or yellow discharge from eye along with pink or red conjunctiva (white part of eye)
5. Open blisters in their mouths along with drooling
6. Weeping lesions that can't be covered with a dry bandage/dressing
7. Any suspicious rash or a rash in various stages including boils, sores, and bumps that may be chicken pox; or a significant rash accompanied by other symptoms of illness.
8. Sore throat that is severe and feeling ill for more than 48 hours or after known diagnosis of Strep throat.
9. Honey-crusted sores around the nose or mouth
10. Large amounts of discolored (green or yellow) nasal discharge
11. Severe ear pain or drainage from the ear
12. Severe headache

## Steps you can do to keep your children healthy during the school year?

1. Educate your children on washing their hands with soap and water for about 20 seconds. Singing the ABC's once to themselves is approximately 20 seconds. They need to wash hands before they eat, and after they go to the bathroom.
2. Educate students on not touching their eyes, mouth or nose without washing their hands first and then washing them after.
3. Encourage your child to get a good night's sleep (8-12 hours is recommended depending on their age).
4. Educate your children to cough and sneeze into their elbow. That way they are not getting the germs on their hands.
5. Encourage your child to eat a healthy diet.
6. Keep children home when they are sick.
7. Educate children on not sharing eating utensils or cups with other children or especially those who are sick.

## Information on Communicable Diseases that can happen in the school setting

### **Enterovirus D68 (EV-D68)**

Most people infected with enteroviruses do not have symptoms or have only mild flu like symptoms. There is no treatment for EV D68. The virus can be found in saliva and nasal mucus. It spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or touching surfaces. However, the virus is very susceptible to drying and is not capable of being spread once it has dried on a surface.

Mild symptoms include fever, runny nose, sneezing, coughing and body/muscle aches. Most of the children who got very ill with EV-D68 infection had trouble breathing and had some wheezing. Many of these children had a history of breathing problems due to asthma or cystic fibrosis.

**If your child develops a fever, runny nose, sneezing, cough, body and muscle aches, please do not send your child to school until he/she does not have a fever, is not taking any medications to reduce the fever, and is well enough to stay in class all day and learn. If they develop breathing problems, you should contact his/her doctor or emergency care physician immediately.**

To help protect your child, please remind them to wash their hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands, avoid kissing, hugging, and sharing cups or eating utensils with people who are sick, and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using a tissue if possible.

### **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)**

Pink eye is an acute condition characterized by redness of the eye(s). It can be caused by a bacteria or virus. Other symptoms include tearing, irritation, photophobia, swelling of the eye lids and/or discharge. Foreign bodies and allergies can also cause redness to the eyes. Pink eye can be spread by coming in contact with the eye or upper respiratory tract drainage. It can also be spread by contaminated fingers, clothing, and other articles especially those coming in close contact with the eyes. **Students with pink or red conjunctiva (white part of eyes) white or yellow discharge, matted eyelids after sleep, eye pain and/or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eyes should be excluded until examined by a health care provider.**

### **Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease**

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is a mild illness occurring most often in school age children. Symptoms can include sudden onset of fever, malaise, poor appetite, and sore throat followed by lesions in the mouth 1-2 days later. The lesions begin as small red spots that blister and may become ulcers. They are usually located on the tongue, gums and inside of the cheeks and can be very painful. A skin rash then develops, which is usually located on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It can be spread by direct contact with discharges from the nose and throat. **Children are often excluded from school during the first few days of the illness because that is when they are most contagious.**

### **Impetigo**

Impetigo is a skin outbreak caused by bacteria. Symptoms include red bumps, usually on the face (particularly around the nose and mouth) or extremities. The red bumps fill with pus, break open and form a honey-colored crust. They are usually itchy but not painful and usually lasts about 2-3 weeks. It can be spread by the drainage from the lesions. **Children need to be kept at home until 24 hours after starting topical or oral antibiotics.**

## Strep Throat

Strep throat is caused by a bacteria. Symptoms include fever, sudden sore throat, pain or difficulty swallowing, white or yellow spots on tonsils, and/or bright red throat. Strep throat is spread by respiratory droplets or direct contact with individuals who have strep throat or with carriers of the bacteria. **Children need to be kept at home at least 24 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment.**

## Norovirus (viral “stomach flu”)

Norovirus is very contagious with symptoms of watery diarrhea, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Most cases have no fever or just a slight fever. Symptoms usually last 24-48 hours. **Students need to be excluded from school until 24 hours after symptoms stop.**

## Other conditions that may arise in the school setting

### Bed Bugs

Bed bugs are reddish brown, flat insects that are ¼ inch long when fully grown. Unlike lice and scabies they **do not** live on the human body. They hide in cracks and crevices near sleeping areas, especially mattresses, box springs and headboards. Bed bugs usually feed on the blood of humans during the night- time hours then return to their hiding places. Some people may experience itching, pain and/or swelling of the skin where the bite occurred within a day or two after the bite. Bed bugs **do not** transmit disease. A school environment does not have suitable feeding hosts present at night, so development of an infestation at school is unlikely. Bed bugs are spread through the purchase of infested second-hand furniture or by hiding on items used during travel, such as suitcases, outerwear, and other belongings. They can occasionally be brought into schools via a book bag, clothing or other personal items from an existing infestation in a home. Though the risk is low, bed bugs could be transferred to another individual’s belongings if they are stored in close contact. There are ways to protect yourself from bedbugs: by reducing clutter in your workplace or school, you provide fewer places for the bed bugs to hide and fewer opportunities for them to hitchhike to your home; keeping your belongings stored separately from other people; and frequently checking items brought home from school.

### Lice

Head lice are common in the community. They are most prevalent among children ages 3-11 years old. Live lice feed on human blood and live close to the human scalp. They are not dangerous and do not spread disease. Symptoms include: tickling of the scalp, itching, irritability, difficulty sleeping, and sores on the scalp. There are many forms of lice to look for when checking your child’s hair. The eggs (sometimes called nits) are tiny, teardrop shapes that attach to the hair shaft. They are often yellowish or white and can look like dandruff but cannot be removed or brushed off. The nymph or baby louse (lice) is smaller and grows to adult size in one to two weeks. The adult louse is the size of a sesame seed and appears tan to grayish-white. An active infestation is when you find a live nymph or adult louse on the scalp or in the hair (most common behind the ears and near the neckline). Head lice are wingless insects that cannot jump or fly. They move by crawling. They are most often spread by direct head-to-head contact with someone that has an active infestation. Head lice are not related to cleanliness and often infect people with good hygiene and grooming habits. If you find that your child has head lice, please contact your family physician or pediatrician right away for appropriate care. There are over the counter medications that will work as well. Family bed linens and recently used clothes, hats and towels should be washed in very hot water. Personal articles, such as combs, brushes, and hair clips should also be washed in hot soapy water or thrown away if they were exposed to the site of infection. All household members and other close contacts should be checked and those with evidence of an

infestation should also be treated at the same time. Please educate your student about not sharing hats, brushes, combs, or hair accessories with other students. Even though the risk of contracting lice from these items are low, it is still a good idea to educate not to share personal items. Also, it is a good idea to frequently check your child's hair for head lice.

### **Information on serious medical illnesses that can happen the in school setting**

#### **Meningitis**

Meningitis is inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by a virus, bacteria, or fungus. The most common signs of meningitis are headache, fever and stiff neck, sensitivity to light, vomiting, fatigue, irritability, skin rashes, and/or seizures. Symptoms can vary depending on the age of the person and cause of the infection. **If you suspect your child has meningitis, seek medical care immediately.**

#### **Ebola**

Ebola is a virus that is very serious and often deadly. **A large outbreak is now occurring in West Africa specifically in Guinea, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone.** Symptoms can appear 2-21 days following exposure. You can only get Ebola from having **direct contact** (touching a person who is sick with Ebola, touching a person who died from Ebola, and or touching body fluids, like blood, vomit, urine, feces, and/or sweat) with someone who is sick with Ebola. Common symptoms of Ebola are fever, headache, joint and muscle pain, weakness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and lack of appetite. **IF YOU NOTICE ANY SIGNS OR SYMPTOMMS OF EBOLA FOLLOWING TRAVEL TO GUINEA, LIBERIA, MALI, and/or SIERRA LEONE STAY HOME FROM WORK, SCHOOL, AND PUBLIC GATHERINGS AND IMMEDIATELY CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER.**

#### **Influenza**

Influenza is a respiratory disease caused by the influenza virus. It can cause an infection of the upper airway and lungs. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, and headaches. **If your child has a fever, please keep them home. They must be fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours before returning to school. If you think your child has influenza please contact your health care provider for further instructions.**

**If at any point you have a question about when to send your child to school, please contact your child's school nurse.**

Sincerely,

East Noble School Corporation Nurses

#### References:

Information obtained from the Indiana State Department of Health Communicable Disease Reference Guide for Schools: 2014 Edition

Indiana State Department of Health Website

National Associations of School Nurses Lice Lessons

Bed Bugs Quick Facts- Indiana University (2005)