

NURSE Notes

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How Sick is Too Sick...to be in school?

As parents you frequently face the challenge of deciding when and if your child should stay home from school. The decision is not always an easy one. The following are some of the guidelines developed by the American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics that may be helpful.

School is not an option if:

- Child cannot participate comfortably in the entire school day, including outdoor recess.
- Child has fever.
- Child has vomiting or diarrhea or has experienced this during the night or previous evening.
- Child has symptoms including fever, lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs
- Child has rash of unexplained origin
- Child has symptoms of infestation, i.e. scabies, lice. Check this out and alert school
- Child has signs of infectious condition i.e. chicken pox.
- Child has lesions (sores) that appear infected
- Child has pink eyes with white or yellow eye discharge.

Other recommendations:

If your child does not meet the above criteria and you want your child to “give it a try” be sure that you are easily available if the arrangement doesn’t work and your child continues to feel sick at school.

Develop alternative plans to care for your sick child in the event that a day at home is not possible for you.

Children may not be in school if they pose a health risk to others. Keep in mind that fevers, vomiting, or listlessness may be signs that your child is ill and needs some recuperation time at home. If symptoms persist contact your child’s physician. In addition, the following is a guide to determine if and when exclusion from school is necessary for some of the more commonly seen conditions.

A “cold” virus	No exclusion
Conjunctivitis (from a cold virus) (few symptoms, no “pus”, mild)	No exclusion
Conjunctivitis (from allergies)	No exclusion
Conjunctivitis (from bacterial infection)	Exclusion until 24 hrs after start of medication
Impetigo	Exclusion until 24 hrs after start of medication
Strep	Exclusion until 24 hrs after start of medication
Chickenpox	Exclusion for 7 days from onset of spots
Head Lice	Exclusion until after treatment
Scabies	Exclusion until after treatment
Fifth’s Disease	No exclusion