

When to Keep a Sick Child Home



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Communicable Disease Division
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Dear Parent or Guardian:

When your child is sick, you have to make the difficult choice of whether to keep them home from school. Staying home when sick is an important way to help prevent the spread of germs that cause illnesses.

Pediatricians recommend keeping your child home if:

- they are not able to take part in normal school activities,
- their illness causes an unsafe or unhealthy place for others at school,
- or when their illness requires care that the school can't manage.

Keep your child home if they have:

- **Fever:** Temperature over 100.4° F along with other signs of illness such as sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, or irritability.
- **Vomiting:** two or more times within 24 hours.
- **Diarrhea:** three or more watery stools within 24 hours.
- **An open or oozing sore:** unless it is properly covered with a bandage that will not leak.

Even if your child does not have these symptoms, your child must stay home from school if they have certain illnesses. A few examples are strep throat, pink eye, chickenpox, mumps or whooping cough (pertussis). These conditions are all infectious and could spread to other children. If your child has any of these conditions, check with the school **before** your child returns to classes.

Many of these diseases are preventable by vaccination including the flu. For immunization information, contact Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 2005.