

Tips from the School Health Office

WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME WITH ILLNESS DURING COLD AND FLU SEASON

Sometimes it can be difficult for a parent to decide whether to send children to school when they wake up with early symptoms of an illness or complaints that they do not feel well. In general, during cold and flu season, unless your child is significantly ill, the best place for them is in school where they have all already been exposed to the same germs and where they are less likely to expose other more vulnerable people, like the very young or very old, to their routine bouts of cold and flu. Remind and show your children to discard used tissues promptly, not to share personal items, to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, to keep their hands away from their face, and to wash hands thoroughly and often with soap and warm water. Suggest that they silently sing the Happy Birthday song twice while washing their hands. However, there are some situations in which it is best to plan on keeping your child home for a day to rest or to arrange for an appointment with your health care provider. The following are a few such situations that warrant watching and possibly conferring with your health care provider:

- Persistent fever greater than 100.4° orally, including a fever that requires control with medication, like Tylenol
- Child is too sleepy or ill from an illness, like vomiting and/or diarrhea, to profit from sitting in class all day
- Significant cough that makes a child feel uncomfortable or disrupts the class
- Sore throat that is severe, accompanied by fever and/or feeling ill, that persists longer than 48 hours, OR after known exposure to a confirmed case of Streptococcal throat infection
- Honey-crusted sores around the nose or mouth or rash on other body parts that might be impetigo; 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 such as fever
- Red, runny eyes that distract the child from learning
- Large amount of discolored nasal discharge, especially if accompanied by facial pain or headache
- Severe ear pain or drainage from the ear
- Severe headache, especially if accompanied by fever

Any condition that you think may be serious or contagious to others.

