

Too Sick for School? Know When to Keep Kids Home.

Signs your child is too sick for school

Health professionals say your child is too sick to go to school and may need to see a doctor if she or he:

- Has unidentified symptoms such as a rash, especially in combination with a low-grade fever.
- Has a family member suffering from a serious contagious illness such as meningitis.
- Is throwing up.
- Has diarrhea.
- Has a temperature above 100 degrees. Child should be fever-free, without pain reliever, for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Has a productive or persistent cough.
- Is in pain from an illness, injury, burn, or bite.
- Has red, itchy and draining eyes. Child diagnosed with pinkeye usually must be on medication for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- Has head lice. Child must have been treated with medicated lice shampoo.
- Has a sore throat with fever or spots on the throat.



(Sources: Pediatrician Maritza Irizarry and school nurse Raianne Hodges-Melton.)

Healthful habits for school and home

One of the most important things parents can do to keep their school kids—and their kids' classmates — healthy is to make sure they get their immunizations as scheduled, Phoenix pediatrician Maritza Irizarry says. Here are other steps that can help:

- Teach your kids to wash their hands. A thorough hand washing after going to the bathroom and before eating will cut down on colds, diarrhea, and other common childhood illnesses.
- Schedule annual physical exams. And don't wait too long to make a doctor's appointment when illnesses develop in between.



- Communicate with your school health office. This is especially important if your kids have special health needs, either temporary or ongoing.
- Teach your kids NOT to share. Certain items, that is. Sharing food, water bottles, pens, and other personal items spreads germs. Lice are easily passed via hats and hair accessories.
- Make sure your children get plenty of sleep. Aim for about nine to 13 hours a night, depending on their age.

(Sources: KidsHealth and the School Network for Absenteeism Prevention)

Reasons to Stay Home

Students on average miss 4.5 school days a year because of illness, according to the School Network for Absenteeism Prevention. These are common reasons for absences:

- Colds
- Diarrhea and other stomach upsets.
- Flu and other respiratory tract infections.
- Ear infections.
- Strep throat.
- Allergies and asthma.
- Pinkeye.
- Head lice.
- On antibiotics for less than 24 hours.



(Sources: Pediatrician Maritza Irizarry and school nurse Raianne Hodges-Melton.)

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