

A snuffle. A cough. A sore throat. Children come down with illnesses big and small. Some are contagious, some are not. How do you know when to keep your child home from school?

3 Questions to Ask About Your Sick Child

To know whether your child should stay home from school, the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests answering these three quick questions:

1. Does your child have a fever? Fevers of 101° F or more are generally a sign of illness, so children should stay home from school.
2. Is your child well enough to engage in class? If ill kids seem too run down to get much out of school, keep them home.
3. Do you think your child has a contagious illness, such as the flu or pinkeye? If so, keep them at home until they're no longer infectious.

When Children Should Stay Home From School

--**Fever** is the body's way of destroying the germs making it sick, and it's a common symptom of infections such as flu. Keep your children home if their temperature is 100° F or higher. Wait until children are fever-free before letting them return to school.

--**Diarrhea** is often the result of infection, food poisoning, or a side effect to medications like antibiotics. Keep children home until stools are formed and your doctor gives the okay. Make sure your sick child stays well-hydrated.

--**Vomiting** is another way for the body to rid itself of the germs making it sick, and is usually caused by a stomach virus or stomach infection. Keep children home if they've vomited once or more in the last 24 hours. They can return to school after symptoms clear up or your doctor says they're no longer contagious.

--**Severe cough and cold** symptoms should keep kids home from school. A serious cough could be a sign of contagious conditions like whooping cough, viral bronchitis, or croup. It can also be a sign of asthma or allergies.

--**Sore throats** can be a symptom of strep or a common cold. If your child has been diagnosed with strep throat, keep your child at home for at least 24 hours after starting antibiotics. If your child has a mild cold, it's okay to go to school.

--**Pinkeye (conjunctivitis)** is contagious, and children should stay home from school for the first 24 hours after treatment begins. Symptoms of pinkeye include eye redness, irritation, swelling, and pus.

--**Headaches** can be a symptom of contagious conditions like viral gastroenteritis, flu, meningitis, and strep throat. Opinions differ on whether a child should be kept home. If your child doesn't have any other signs of illness, and feels okay, your child can go to school.

--**Rashes** can be the sign of contagious conditions such as chickenpox, bacterial meningitis, or impetigo. Children should be kept home until they're diagnosed. They can return to school after symptoms are gone and their doctor gives the okay.

--**Earaches** aren't contagious. There's no need to keep a child with a mild earache home, as long as your child feels well enough to concentrate.

--**Mild cold or respiratory symptoms** are no reason to keep children at home so long as their nasal drainage is clear and their cough is mild.