



Is your Child too Sick for School? *BettySue Hickson, School Nurse Consultant*

With the start of a new school year, this guideline may help parents determine whether to send their sick child to school or not. With minor symptoms, it can be difficult to tell whether the child is going to get better or worse during the course of the day. The main reasons for keeping children home are:

- If he or she is too sick to be comfortable at school.
- If he or she might spread a contagious disease to other children.

Children, staff, parents and/or volunteers should be excluded from the classroom if any of the following are noted:

- A fever over 100.4 degrees F
- Nausea, vomiting or abdominal pain
- Diarrhea-frequent, loose, watery stools
- Unusual drowsiness or tiredness
- Sore throat, acute cold or persistent cough
- Runny nose (thick green/yellow discharge) (non-allergenic)
- Red, inflamed or discharging eyes (pink eye) (non-allergenic) must be treated with antibiotic drop/ointment for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- Swollen glands around jaws, ears or neck
- Any skin sore oozing of fluid, suspected impetigo (may have a yellow crusty discharge from sore)
- Suspected head or body lice (untreated)
- Earache
- An unexplained rash
- Symptoms which may suggest an acute illness

Conditions needing treatment with an antibiotic may return to the classroom after at least 24 hours of treatment and a decrease in symptoms.

All of these illnesses can spread easily, both in school and in the family. Keep in mind that hand washing is the single most important thing you can do (and teach children to do) to help prevent the spread of infections.

Whenever there is doubt about sending children to school, parents should consult their child's doctor before doing so. A phone consultation may be all that is necessary, the child's doctor may need to see the child in the office, or may be able to consult with the provider via telemedicine.

It is always important that schools know how to reach a parent during the day, and that there is a back-up plan and phone number on file if they cannot be reached.