

When can my child return to school?

Patient and Family Education

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

Is your child too sick for childcare or school?

It is often hard to decide early in the morning if your child is too sick to go to his childcare center or school. It can be hard to tell if minor symptoms will get better or worse during the day.

Use these guidelines to help you decide when to keep your child home. **Check with your child's school for more specific guidelines.**

Illness	Contagious?	Symptoms	When to return to childcare or school
Chickenpox	Yes – spread by direct contact with fluid inside blisters or with droplets from mouth or nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Red, itchy rash on body – changes from bumps to blisters to scabs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your child's doctor about treatment for your child. • Keep your child home until all the bumps have scabs and no new bumps appear for 2 days. • Tell the school and playmate's parents if your child gets chickenpox. • Children who have not yet had chickenpox should receive a shot (vaccine) to protect them from the disease.
Colds	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runny nose • Scratchy throat • Cough <p>NOTE: These symptoms may also be caused by allergies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child may go to childcare with minor cold symptoms. • If symptoms are worse than you might expect with a common cold, call your child's doctor. Call right away if your child is not acting normally, has a fever or has any trouble breathing.
Fever	Depends on cause	Temperature over 100 °F	Keep your child home until there is no fever without using medicines for 24 hours.
Flu	Yes - spread by contact with droplets from eyes, mouth or nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Chills • Cold symptoms • Body aches • Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea 	<p>Keep your child home until there is no fever without using medicines for 24 hours and symptoms subside. This is usually for 5 to 7 days.</p> <p>NOTE: Children with chronic health problems should have a flu shot each year.</p>

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

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Illness	Contagious?	Symptoms	When to return to childcare or school
Impetigo	Yes – spread by direct contact or by droplets from mouth or nose	Red, oozing, blister-like rash on body or face	Keep your child home until his doctor says it is OK to return to school.
Middle ear infections	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear pain • Fever 	Your child may attend school if comfort level allows.
MRSA	Yes – spread from person to person by hand contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swelling • Drainage • Fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give antibiotics if advised by your child’s doctor. • Your child may return to school once treatment is started. • For open sores, keep covered until no more drainage. • No close contact sports until all sites are healed.
Pinkeye	Yes – spread by a germ or virus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watery eyes • Itchy eyes • Redness in whites of eyes • Puffy eyelids • Drainage from eyes <p>NOTE: These symptoms may also be caused by allergies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat your child’s pinkeye as advised by his doctor. This may include antibiotics. • Your child may return to school once treatment begins.
Ringworm	Yes – spread by direct contact. Ringworm can affect the skin or scalp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin – pink, raised patches and mild itching • Scalp – flaky or crusty patches, and hair loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat your child’s skin or scalp as advised by his doctor. • For skin - keep patches covered with a bandage. • For scalp - teach your child not to share hats, brushes, combs, clothing or linens. • Your child may return to school once treatment is started.
Scabies and lice	Yes – spread by direct contact. Scabies affects the skin; lice affect the scalp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itching • Scratching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat your child’s skin or scalp right away as advised by his doctor. • For scabies - keep your child home until after treatment is started. • For lice - keep your child home until all live lice are gone. Check your child’s head for lice for 7 to 10 days. Re-treat, as needed. • Teach your child not to share hats, brushes, combs, clothing or linens.

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Strep throat or scarlet fever	Yes – spread by contact with droplets from mouth or nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sore throat • Fever • Headache • Stomach ache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your child to the doctor if he has these symptoms. • Keep your child home until he is free of fever and on antibiotics for 24 hours.
Vomiting or diarrhea	Depends on cause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomits more than once • Loose, runny stools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your child home until there is no fever without using medicines for 24 hours and symptoms subside. • For vomiting – also, keep your child home until he has not vomited for at least 24 hours. • For diarrhea – also, keep your child home until he has not had diarrhea for at least 24 hours. This includes children who wear diapers. • If diarrhea or vomiting occur often or occur with a fever, rash or general weakness, call your child’s doctor.

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