

## When to keep **Your Child** Home from School

It is a question every parent wrestles with at one time or another: when is a child too sick to send to school? Is that nagging cough the sign of a serious illness? Is your child's upset stomach really the flu, or the result of too many cookies the night before? Should you keep your child home for a slight fever, or wait to see if it goes away later in the day?

Germs are one of the few things that all children share with one another and not every snuffle or cough is contagious. Here, at **Associated Pediatricians** we offer tips on how to tell whether to keep a child home from school:

**Fever** – It's best that a child who has a fever of 101° or higher stay home from school until he/she has been fever-free for at least 24 hours. After that point, you know that the child is less likely to be contagious. In addition, this gives the child time to rehydrate and get enough rest.

**Vomiting** – If your child has been vomiting repeatedly or has other flu like symptoms, spending time away from school would be wise. Conversely, if your child tends to vomit easily, a day home from school may not be warranted. It all depends on the child, and common sense dictates. For instance, if the vomiting is limited to a single episode and you can attribute it to a certain situation, such as something the child has eaten the night before, it might not be necessary to keep the child home from school.

**Diarrhea** – If your child has diarrhea, this could be an indication that the child is contagious, particularly if the child is nauseated or has a fever. During this period, it's wise for the child to remain at home in order for him/her to get the rest he/she needs to recover from the illness. His/her stools may remain loose and frequent for some time. At this point, the child would no longer be contagious and would be able to attend school.

**Sore Throat** – When your child's sore throat is accompanied by a fever, or the child's throat is very inflamed, he/she should stay home. Not all sore throats will warrant a day home from school. Students with strep infections may return to school after they have been treated with antibiotics for a minimum of 24 hours and are fever-free.

**Chickenpox** – Children who have chickenpox should recuperate at home until at least six days after the chickenpox have appeared, or until the pox have all scabbed over. If you know that your child has been exposed to chickenpox and they have not received the chickenpox vaccination, you may want to consider having the child vaccinated within 72 hours of exposure. Doing so may help the child avoid getting chickenpox. At the very least, the vaccine will reduce the severity of the illness.

**Undiagnosed Skin Rashes** – Unless you know the cause of the skin rash and know that it is not contagious, it is best to consult a pediatrician before sending the child to school. A lot of rashes represent the ending of an illness and are not contagious.

**Eye Discharge** – Children who have bloodshot eyes with yellow drainage may have conjunctivitis, a contagious eye condition commonly called "pinkeye." Children with pinkeye should not attend school until they have consulted their doctor, who may prescribe antibiotic drops.

Other conditions which may necessitate that students' stay home from school include discharge from ears and cold symptoms associated with other signs of illness.

For more information, please contact your pediatrician or the school nurse at your child's school.