

Health guidance for going to school

Showing up to school every day is important for children's well-being, engagement, and learning.



You can send children to school if they're:

- Generally healthy and well
- Participating in usual day-to-day activities

They can even go to school if they have:

- A mild cold, including a runny nose and/or cough
- Eye drainage without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness
- A mild stomachache
- A mild rash with no other symptoms
- Head lice – though annoying and should be treated, lice isn't a reason to stay home
- No fever overnight and hasn't taken fever-reducing medicine during that time.

Avoid keeping children at home unless they're too sick to participate. See the back of this handout for more details. In most situations, a doctor's note isn't needed to return.

Children may also avoid school due to anxiety (symptoms may include decreased appetite, feeling tired, stomachache, or headache). If you're worried that your child is suffering from anxiety, talk with a school nurse, social worker, or other school staff about the challenges – and identify what can help your child stay in school.




Note: This document is not meant to take the place of local health department/school district guidance including about illnesses such as COVID-19 and the flu.



If your child has a compromised immune system or is high risk for complications from common illnesses, talk to your school (school nurse if available) about developing a plan with you and your child's doctor to keep them healthy and safe at school.



When to stay home from school and when to return to school

 Symptom	 When to stay home and when to get medical care	 When to return to school
Fever	Stay home: fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. Get medical care: fever and any of the following – ear pain, sore throat, rash, stomachache, headache, or tooth pain.	Haven't had a fever overnight without use of fever-reducing medication and they're feeling better.
Vomiting and/or diarrhea	Stay home: vomited 2 or more times in the last 24 hours, stool is watery, and/or they can't make it to the toilet in time. Get medical care: stomach cramping and fever, bloody or black stool, or have signs of dehydration (tired and sleepy, dry mouth, and not urinating at least once in the last 8 hours).	No vomiting overnight and can drink liquids without throwing up. Diarrhea has improved.
Persistent cough or trouble breathing	Get medical care: a persistent cough, difficulty breathing or trouble catching their breath, or they have a fever with the cough. These symptoms may be signs of COVID-19 or the flu and should be assessed by a health care provider.	They're feeling better and cleared for return by a health care provider. If symptoms were due to asthma, get permission to use breathing medication at school.
Rash	Get medical care: the rash has blisters, is draining, is painful, looks like bruises, and/or a fever develops.	Rash has healed or they're cleared for return by a health care provider.
Eye irritation	Get medical care: eye swelling, eye pain, trouble seeing, or an eye injury.	They're feeling better.
Sore throat	Get medical care: they're drooling, have trouble swallowing, or develop a fever and/or rash.	They're feeling better. If prescribed an antibiotic, return 12 hours after the first dose, and without a fever.

If you don't know whether to send your child to school or have concerns about their health, contact your child's doctor, local urgent care, or the school nurse.

