

Health Flyer for Parents

Illness Guidelines: When Should I Keep My Child Home?

January 2024



Regular school attendance has a direct impact on school performance. There is evidence that poor attendance can influence whether children read proficiently by the end of third grade. By 6th grade, chronic absence becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school and data trends show that missing 18 days in a school year negatively affects a student's academic performance and impacts your school's accreditation. Each day's absence is a student missing several hours of instruction and making up assignments cannot replace the value of in-class learning time. We understand that children do get sick and need to stay at home but we want to partner with you to minimize your child's time away from their learning opportunities. In order to aid your decision-making about school attendance, please review the following:

Helpful Tips

- Ensure that your child comes to school every day unless an absence is necessary. This will help your child succeed.
- Make medical and dental appointments in the late afternoon so your child can attend as much of the school day as possible.
- If your child must miss school, make sure you get his or her homework assignments and ensure that the work is completed and turned in.
- Call the school as soon as you know your child will be absent and tell school staff why your child will be out and for how long.
- Get a doctor's note anytime your student has an appointment during the school day and give the note to the main office at the school or have the doctor's office fax/email the note to the school..
- If your child has a chronic health condition such as asthma, severe allergies, or diabetes, provide the school nurse with the appropriate action plan, medication, and supplies.
- Keep an open line of communication with your school nurse and school staff. The more the school knows about your child's health needs, the better prepared everyone will be to work together to support your child.
- Reach out to the nurse at your child's school with any health questions.
- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, most younger children need 10-12 hours per night and adolescents (13-18 years of age) need 8-10 hours per night.

Report Absences

When a student is absent from school for an entire day or for one or more class periods, a parent or guardian must notify the school in a written, faxed, or emailed note **within three (3) days of the student returning to school. The written notification must contain the following:**

- the date the note is written;
- the student's full name;
- the reason(s) for the absence(s);
- the date(s) of the absence(s); and
- the parent's or guardian's signature (acceptable by email if address can be verified by school)

For Additional Information

- Virginia Department of Health: www.vdh.virginia.gov/backtoschool/
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- The American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org



When Should I Keep My Child Home?

The chart below is general guidance to help you when your child is sick and does not replace consulting with your doctor for health guidance. Please reach out to your school nurse with questions and take your child to the doctor as needed. If your child is following a plan for attendance, please communicate with school administration and obtain a doctor's note if required.

Symptoms & Illnesses	Should I Keep My Child Home?
Fever Fever usually means illness, especially if your child has a fever of 100 or higher as well as other symptoms like behavior change, rash, sore throat, headache, vomiting, etc.	Yes - if your child has a fever of 100 or higher, keep them home until the fever is below 100 for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication (Tylenol, Ibuprofen-Advil, Motrin). If the fever does not go away after 2-3 days or is 102 or higher, contact your doctor.
"Flu-Like" Symptoms Symptoms usually come on suddenly: fever, cough, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, tiredness, muscle or body aches, headaches, vomiting or diarrhea	Yes- keep your child at home until symptoms improve enough that they can actively participate in the school day. See guidelines above for fever. If your child went to the doctor, follow the doctor's advice for returning to school.
Coughing Severe, uncontrolled, rapid coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing	Yes - keep your child home and contact the doctor. If the symptoms are due to asthma, give treatment according to your child's Asthma Action plan. When symptoms are controlled, send your child to school. Make sure the nurse has the Asthma Action Plan.
Cold Symptoms Symptoms usually come on gradually: stuffy/runny nose, sneezing, mild cough, earache	No - unless symptoms are severe or your child is not able to participate in the school day.
Vomiting Vomiting can have many causes and may not always be from illness.	Yes - keep your child home if they have vomited 2 or more times in a 24-hour period or if they also have diarrhea or fever. Keep your child home until the vomiting has stopped for 24 hours.
Diarrhea Frequent, loose or watery stool may mean illness but it can also be caused by food or medication.	No - unless in addition to diarrhea, your child acts ill, is vomiting, has a fever or if the diarrhea is severe. If additional symptoms are present, keep your child home until the diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours. Call the doctor if the stool is bloody or if your child has abdominal pain, fever or vomiting.
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) The white of the eye is pink and there is a thick yellow/green discharge.	Yes - If there is discharge from the eye, your child must be evaluated by a doctor before returning to school. If your child is given an antibiotic, they should stay home until they have been on the antibiotic for 24 hours.
Strep Throat Sore throat, fever, stomachache, and red, swollen tonsils	Yes - take your child to the doctor and keep them home until they have taken the antibiotic for 24 hours, are fever free for 24 hours, and feel better.
Head Lice Intense itching of the head; may feel like something is moving	No - your child can be in school after they have been treated with lice shampoo. Report all cases of head lice to the school nurse.
Rash	No - unless the child is not feeling well or has a fever. Call the doctor if the child has a fever, the rash is spreading quickly, the child has open wounds or intense itching.
COVID-19 fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell, sore throat, tiredness, muscle aches, runny nose/congestion, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, headaches	Yes - follow guidance by the Virginia Department of Health and keep your child at home until they have completed at least 5 days of isolation. Follow the guidance above for a fever.
Chicken Pox fever, headache, stomach ache or sore throat, then a red itchy skin rash	Yes - keep your child at home until the doctor has determined that they are no longer contagious and the blisters have crusted.

The suggestions above are for children ages 5-18 years of age. Recommendations may be different for infants and younger children. This information is based on recommended guidelines from the Virginia Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the American Academy of Pediatrics.