

A guide to illness

Too sick for school? By Marguerite Lamb



"Mom, I don't feel good." Now what? Should you let your child stay home?

Call the doctor? We asked Steven P. Shelov, M.D., coeditor of *The American Academy of Pediatrics Guide to Your Child's Symptoms*.

	WHEN TO STAY HOME:	WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR:
<b>FEVER</b> <i>IF FEVER FREE FOR 24 HOURS MAY RETURN TO SCHOOL</i>	If your child's temperature is 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. A fever usually signals a contagious infection.	If he seems unusually lethargic, has a severe headache, is hallucinating or delirious, or still looks ill after the fever breaks.
<b>COUGH</b>	If his cough is persistent, severe, brings up mucus, or is accompanied by a fever.	If your child starts to have noisy, rapid, or difficult breathing, or you notice a blue tinge to his lips or fingernails.
<b>RUNNY NOSE</b>	If he has other cold or flu symptoms. A drippy nose alone is no reason to skip school; just be sure he has plenty of tissues!	If your child is having difficulty breathing, is unusually sleepy or lethargic, or has a fever over 101 Fahrenheit.
<b>SORE THROAT</b>	If the pain seems moderate to severe and isn't relieved by taking a drink.	If there's also has a fever, spots on the throat, a severe headache, rash, swollen glands, red or painful joints, nausea, or trouble breathing.
<b>STOMACHACHE</b>	If the pain seems sharp or is concentrated in a specific area of the stomach, or is accompanied by fever, vomiting, or diarrhea.	If it's severe and lasts longer than two hours, is accompanied by severe vomiting, or there's blood in vomit, stool, or urine.
<b>DIARRHEA</b>	As long as your child is still having loose bowel movements.	If it lasts past 48 hours, or if your child has a fever, is vomiting, there's blood in his stool, or you suspect dehydration.
<b>VOMITING</b>	If your child has thrown up within the past few hours, or has a fever or no appetite.	If your child also has a fever or diarrhea that lasts more than 12 hours, or shows signs of dehydration.
<b>EARACHE</b>	If your child also has a fever (this usually means an ear infection).	If your child has a fever, discharge from or swelling around the ear, headache, dizziness, or hearing loss.
<b>RASH</b>	Until it's diagnosed.	No matter what. Many rashes are contagious; any skin eruptions should be seen and diagnosed by your pediatrician.

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