



# Keeping Children Home From School

## Guide for Parents

... whether symptoms get better or worse during the course of the day. If your child is still really unwell, and follow the guidelines below when deciding if your child should attend school or stay home:

### The main reasons for keeping your child home are:

- if she's too sick to be comfortable at school or to take part in educational activities
- if she might spread a contagious disease to other children

### As a rule of thumb, a child should stay home if:

- fever of 100°F
- vomiting
- diarrhoea
- frequent cough
- persistent pain (ear, stomach, head, etc)
- widespread rash (eg chicken pox)

Most of these problems need to be discussed with your child's doctor.

### The following guidelines may help in your decision:

- **Runny nose** is the way many children respond to a cold virus. Minor cold or allergy symptoms are usually a reason to miss school. Many healthy children have up to six colds per year, especially in the early school years. A child should stay home if she is too uncomfortable

sign of a secondary infection (conjunctivitis, pneumonia), or if your child's cough is worse than you might expect with a common cold, you need to consult your child's doctor. You should do so immediately if the child is not acting normally, has a fever, or has any difficulty breathing.

- **Diarrhoea and vomiting** make children uncomfortable. It could be very uncomfortable and embarrassing for your child to have another episode while in school. A child should be symptom-free for 48 hours and be able to hold down food and fluids before returning to school.
- **Fever** (100°F or higher) is an important symptom – especially when it occurs along with a sore throat, nausea or a rash. Your child could have a contagious illness, which could be passed to classmates and teachers. While you can treat the fever, and usually make the child feel better temporarily, the cause of the fever (and the risk of passing it to others) is still there. Children with fever should stay home until there is no fever for 48 hours.
- **Sore throat.** Consult your child's physician for advice regarding diagnosis and treatment. A child should stay at home if she is too uncomfortable to complete her work and participate in other school activities.
- **Pinkeye or conjunctivitis** can be caused by a virus, bacteria or allergy. The first two are very contagious. The eye will be reddened and a cloudy or yellow discharge is usually present. The eye may be sensitive to light. Consult with your child's

**Middle ear infections** can cause great discomfort, fever, but are not contagious to others. The child's doctor for diagnosis and treatment and she should stay home if she has fever or pain.

▪ **Flu** is a contagious virus that usually occurs in the winter months. Symptoms include body aches, high fever, congestion, sore throat, and, in some children, vomiting. Children should stay home until these symptoms have improved for five to seven days. Consult your child's doctor for suggestions to make your child more comfortable.

#### **Skin Infection**

- *chicken pox* – remain at home until spots have healed
- *impetigo* – remain at home until spots have healed
- *molluscum* – personal items, such as towels, swimwear, swimsuits, should not be shared

**This information is based on the latest guidelines from the Public Health Agency of Canada.**

