

Should I Keep My Child Off School?

It can be challenging deciding whether to keep your child off school when they are unwell. Please see the [NHS guidelines and advice](#) below on how to deal with the most common illnesses.

When it's fine to go to school

✓ Cold sores

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have a cold sore - a tiny blister that develops on the lips or around the mouth. Encourage them not to touch the blister or kiss anyone while they have the cold sore, or to share things like cups and towels.

✓ Conjunctivitis

Again, you don't need to keep your child away from school if they have conjunctivitis an eye condition caused by infection or allergies. The NHS recommends you get advice from your pharmacist and encourage your child not to rub their eyes and to wash their hands regularly.

✓ Coughs and colds

It's fine to send your child to school with a minor cough or cold. **However, if they have a fever, keep them off school until the fever goes (24 hours).** Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues and to wash their hands regularly.

Top tips for parents for protecting children from winter bugs

1. Make sure children wash their hands properly

This prevents the spread of bugs like Norovirus and Shigella, as well as the common cold.

2. Keep children away from other poorly children

Colds and coughs are almost unavoidable so this is one solution to protect them.

3. Get children the free NHS flu vaccine

All children from two years old to the end of primary school are eligible for a free NHS flu vaccine

4. Wrap asthma sufferers up in a scarf

Wrapping a scarf loosely over your child's nose and mouth helps prevent airways from becoming inflamed

5. Keep children's skin moisturised

This prevents eczema flare ups

6. Avoid woollen clothes

Opt for cotton clothes in the winter as wool can trigger eczema. You should make sure you child knows to throw away any used tissues straight away and to wash their hands regularly.

✓ Hand, foot and mouth disease

Hand, foot and mouth disease is particularly common in children and causes ulcers, or sores, inside or around the mouth, and a rash or blisters on the hands, feet, legs or buttocks. While it's not pleasant, it's not serious and there's no need to keep children off school if they have it.

✓ Head lice and nits

It's very common for young children to get head lice given their heads are often close together as they play or do their schoolwork. While they spread easily at school, the NHS says there's no need to keep your child at home. However, parents should let their teacher know if their child has them and remove the nits through wet combing.

✓ Slapped cheek syndrome

Slapped cheek syndrome is a viral infection and usually causes a bright red rash on the cheeks. Although the rash can look alarming, children do not need to be kept off school because once the rash appears, they're no longer infectious. If you suspect your child has the infection, take them to the GP and let their school know if they're diagnosed with it. It should clear up on its own within three weeks.

✓ Sore throat

You can send your child to school if they have a sore throat. However, **if they also have a fever** you should keep them at home until it goes away (**min. 24 hours**).

✓ Threadworms

Threadworms are tiny worms in your poo that look like pieces of white thread. While they sound scary, they can be treated without seeing your GP and you can buy medicine for threadworms from pharmacies. You don't have to keep children off school but make sure you treat everyone in your household, even if they do not have symptoms.

✓ Ringworm

Ringworm is a common fungal infection in children and normally causes a red or silver rash. The NHS says to see your pharmacist unless it's on their scalp, in which case you should see the GP. It's fine for your child to go to school once they have started treatment.

When your child should not be sent to school

X Chickenpox

If your child has chickenpox you should keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over. This is usually about five days after the spots first appeared.

X Diarrhoea or vomiting

Children with diarrhoea or vomiting should stay away from school for two days after their symptoms have gone **(48 hours after last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea)**. They're often caused by a stomach bug and should stop in a few days.

How to treat your child's diarrhoea and vomiting

DO:

- ✓ Make sure children stay at home and get plenty of rest
- ✓ Give them lots of fluids, such as water or squash to avoid dehydration – make them take small sips if they feel sick
- ✓ Get children to eat when they feel able to – they don't need to eat or avoid any specific foods
- ✓ Give children paracetamol if they're in discomfort – check the leaflet before giving it to your child

DON'T

- X Don't let children have fruit juice or fizzy drinks - they can make diarrhoea worse
- X Do not give children under 12 medicine to stop diarrhoea
- X Do not give aspirin to children under 16

X Ear infection

If your child has an ear infection and a fever or severe earache, keep them off school until they're feeling better or their fever goes away. Ear infections often get better on their own within three days, although sometimes symptoms can last up to a week.

X Fever - return to school after 24 hours

A normal temperature in babies and children is about 36.4C, but this can vary slightly from child to child. A fever is a high temperature of 38C or more and is very common in young children. If your child has a fever, keep them off school until the fever goes away. The temperature usually returns to normal within three or four days.

X Scarlet fever

Scarlet fever triggers flu-like symptoms, including a high temperature of 38C or above, a sore throat, swollen neck glands (a large lump on the side of your neck) and a rash a few days later. If your child has scarlet fever, they'll need treatment with antibiotics from the GP - otherwise they'll be infectious for two to three weeks. **Your child can go back to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.**

X Impetigo

Impetigo is a skin infection that's **very contagious** so it's best to keep your child off school if they have it.

