

Updated March 2025

Staying Home from School or Childcare When Your Child is Sick



If you think that your child has an illness that can be spread to others, please keep him or her home from school or childcare. Contact your healthcare provider or clinic if you think medical attention is needed.

The School and Childcare Exclusion List was updated December 2024.

Dear Parents/Caregivers:

Help your child stay healthy and ready to learn! We hope that your child never has to miss school or childcare because of sickness. For many illnesses it is OK to go to school, especially when symptoms are mild. Frequent handwashing and staying up to date with vaccinations can help prevent illnesses.

DPH publishes the School and Childcare Exclusion List each year. The Exclusion List explains how long ill children should stay out of school or childcare, and what is needed before returning. Your child's healthcare provider can also help if you have questions about your child's health.

Information for specific illnesses can be found on the School and Childcare Exclusion List on the web at the following address:
<https://dph.sc.gov/health-wellness/child-teen-health/school-exclusion>

Questions to Consider When Your Child is Sick:

1. Does your child's illness keep him/her from comfortably taking part in activities?
2. Does your sick child need more care than the staff can give without affecting the health and safety of other children?
3. Could other children get sick from being near your child?

If the answer to any of these questions is "Yes," please keep your child out of school or childcare.

Should my child stay home?

A Quick Reference for Parents/Caregivers of Children

Cough

A mild cough does not necessarily mean that a child needs to stay home. Your child will need to stay home if the cough is constant, causes shortness of breath, problems breathing, or if they have a fever.

Diarrhea

Keep your child home if he or she has 3 or more loose stools in 24 hours. Your child may return when they have no more than 2 stools above their normal and stool is contained in the diaper for diapered children.

Fever

Keep your child home for a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher AND experiencing behavior change or other signs of illness. Your child may return when they no longer have a fever for 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine.

Rash

Keep your child home if the rash is associated with change in behavior, fever, tenderness, oozing, or is an open wound that can't be covered.

Vomiting

Keep your child home if unexplained vomiting has occurred 2 or more times in a 24-hour period. Your child may return when well enough to participate in routine activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

When should sick children stay home from school or childcare?

If your child feels too sick to go to school or childcare and is unable to participate in activities, please keep him or her at home.

Does my child need to stay home when the child just has a cold?

Most children with mild colds who have no fever (without taking fever reducing medication) and who feel well enough to go to school or childcare do not need to stay home.

Does my child need to be out of school or childcare if the child has pinkeye?

No. It is helpful to think of pinkeye like the common cold—it usually clears up without medicine.

How long will my child need to stay home if the child is sick?

The School and Childcare Exclusion List explains how long children should stay home after they become sick with certain illnesses.

When would my child have to stay home if my child is not sick?

Sometimes children will have to stay home from school or childcare if they are exposed to certain diseases. Your school, childcare center, or local health department will discuss the amount of time with you.

What illness might keep my child from participating in other activities?

Children with illnesses that can be spread to others may not be allowed to participate in some sports, physical education, or other school activities.



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

DPH Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section
400 Otarre Parkway, Cayce, SC 29033
Phone: 803.898.0861 / Fax: 803.898.0897

<https://dph.sc.gov/health-wellness/child-teen-health/school-exclusion>