

Is my child too ill for school?

It can be tricky deciding whether to keep your child off school when they are unwell.

There are government guideline for schools and nurseries about [managing specific diseases at Gov.uk](#). These guidelines advise when children should be kept off school and when they shouldn't.

If you do keep your child at home, it is essential to phone school on the first day of absence to provide the reason your child will not be in school.

If your child is well enough to go to school but has an infection that could be passed on, such as a cold sore or head lice, please let their class teacher or the school office know.

Coughs and colds

It is fine to send your child to school with a minor cough or common cold. If they have a fever, keep them off school until the fever goes.

Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues and to wash their hands regularly.

High temperature

If your child has a high temperature, keep them off school until it returns to below 38C.

Chickenpox

If your child has chickenpox, keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over. This is usually about 5 days after the spots first appeared.

Cold sores

There is no need to keep your child off school if they have a cold sore.

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

You don't need to keep your child away from school if they have conjunctivitis. We do advise that you speak with a pharmacist before sending your child to school. Encourage your child not to rub their eyes and to wash their hands regularly.

Covid

Children and young people with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to go to school.

However, those who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people where they can. They can go back to school and resume normal activities when they no longer have a high temperature, and they are well enough to attend. There is no requirement to test children or adults anymore.

Ear infection

If your child has an ear infection and a high temperature or severe earache, keep them off school until they are feeling better, or their high temperature goes away.

Hand, foot and mouth disease.

If your child has hand foot and mouth disease but seems well enough to go to school, there is no need to keep them off. It is important to notify school if your child is attending school with a confirmed case of Hand, foot, and mouth disease. Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues and to wash their hands regularly.

Head lice and nits

There is no need to keep your child off school if they have head lice, please make your child's teacher aware and treat as soon as possible. You can treat head lice and nits without seeing a GP.

Impetigo

If your child has impetigo, they will need treatment from a GP, often with antibiotics.

Keep them off school until all the sores have crusted over and healed, or for 48 hours after they start antibiotic treatment.

Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly and not to share things like towels and cups with other children at school.

Ringworm

If your child has ringworm, see your pharmacist unless it is on their scalp, in which case you should see a GP.

It is fine for your child to go to school once they have started treatment.

Scarlet fever

If your child has scarlet fever, they will need treatment with antibiotics from a GP, otherwise they will be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks.

Your child can go back to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

Slapped cheek syndrome (fifth disease)

You don't need to keep your child off school if they have slapped cheek syndrome, because once the rash appears, they are no longer infectious.

Sore throat

Your child can still attend school with a sore throat, but if they also have a high temperature they should stay at home until it goes away.

Threadworms

Your child can still attend school if they have threadworms. Please make sure your class teacher is aware and treat as soon as possible. Your pharmacist can recommend a treatment.

Vomiting and Diarrhoea

Children with vomiting and diarrhoea should stay away from school for 48 hours after their symptoms have gone.