

Updated March 2024

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 March 2024

Dear Parents:

This guide lists the illnesses for which a child must be kept out of school or childcare. It tells you if your child needs a doctor's note or medical treatment to come back to school or childcare after certain illnesses. If you have any questions about the School and Childcare Exclusion List, please contact your child's school, childcare, or your local health department.

DHEC has also posted the School and Childcare Exclusion List on the web at the following address:

www.scdhec.gov/health/child-teen-health/school-exclusion

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, or has one of the illnesses on this form, please keep him or her home.

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

Most children with mild colds who have no fever and who feel well enough to go to school or childcare do not need to stay home. Most colds spread in the 1-3 days before children show symptoms such as a runny nose or minor cough.

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

It is helpful to think of pinkeye like the common cold. It can be spread to others, but it usually clears up without medicine. The best way to keep a child from spreading pinkeye is to encourage good handwashing. If your child has pinkeye and a fever or severe eye pain, take him or her to see a doctor.

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

This guide explains how long children should stay home after they become sick with certain illnesses.

When would my child have to stay out of school or childcare if the child was not sick?

Sometimes children will also have to stay home from school or childcare if they are exposed to some diseases that are preventable by vaccines or if they need to provide a specimen that shows they are no longer shedding organisms that can cause diarrhea. Your school, childcare center or local health department will discuss the amount of time with you.

If my child was excluded, what does my child need to come back to school or childcare?

The School and Childcare Exclusion List shows whether a **medical note** or **parent note** is required for your child to return to school or childcare after being absent for an illness.

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

Children with illnesses spread by close contact, like lice, scabies, shingles, staph or strep skin infections may not be allowed to participate in some sports or physical education activities. Children with mononucleosis (Mono) or CMV may be told not to participate in Physical Education (PE) or sports in order to avoid injuries. Children with diarrhea may be restricted from participation in water activities like swimming, splash pads, or water tables.

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.

School and Childcare Exclusion List: A Quick Reference for Parents of Children

Chicken Pox / Varicella

Children with chicken pox may return with a parent note once all of the sores and blisters are dried or scabbed over. If there are no scabs, the child may return to school or childcare when no new sores appear for 24 hours.

Coronavirus Infectious Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Children with a positive COVID-19 test should stay home until they have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication AND improvement of symptoms.

Diarrhea:

For most kinds of diarrhea (defined as 3 or more loose stools in 24 hours):

Children in 5th grade or younger should stay home until diarrhea stops for 24 hours, or until a healthcare provider clears the child to return to school. Your child can return with a **parent note**.

Older children in **6th through 12th grades** with diarrhea do not have to stay home, unless they are spreading illness in the school setting, they have diarrhea with blood or mucus, or they have diarrhea from one of the contagious conditions listed below.

Children of any age must have a **medical note** to return to school or childcare after having diarrhea that contains blood or mucus. *Children with non-infectious illnesses such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) or Crohn's Disease often have uncontrolled diarrhea containing either blood or mucus. These children do not have to have a medical note to return to school or childcare once symptoms have resolved.*

Children who can use the restroom or whose diarrhea is contained in diaper-type underwear do not have to be excluded if the diarrhea is known to be from a non-contagious condition, or if it continues after the child completes antibiotics for a diarrhea-causing illness.

A medically fragile child or child who needs help with using the bathroom may need to be out of school or childcare if the diarrhea makes it hard for his or her caretakers to keep the classroom clean.

Restrict recreational water activities (pools, splash pads, water tables, etc.) until diarrheal symptoms resolve unless indicated below. For diapered children or students of any age who require assistance with personal hygiene, restrict water activities until 1 week after cessation of diarrhea unless indicated below.

If your child was diagnosed with *Cryptosporidium* please wait 2 weeks after diarrhea has stopped before participating in recreational water activities

If your child was diagnosed with *Giardia* please wait 1 week after diarrhea has stopped before participating in recreational water activities.

Children of any age are **excluded** with Diarrhea from *Campylobacter*, *Cryptosporidium*, *E. coli* (Enteropathogenic *E. coli* (EPEC), Enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC), Shiga Toxin Producing *E. coli* (STEC)), *Giardia*, *Norovirus*, *Rotavirus*, *Salmonella*, or *Shigella*:

E. coli 0157:H7 and other Shiga Toxin Producing E. coli (STEC):

For all ages do not allow recreational water activities (pools, splash pads, water tables, etc.) until 2 weeks after diarrheal symptoms stop.

- **Children in childcare and students under 5 years of age:** Must have 2 back to back tests taken at least 24 hours apart test negative for **STEC**. If antibiotics were prescribed the stool cultures must be collected at least 48 hours after antibiotic completion.
- **Students 5 years of age or older thru grade 12:** Exclude until diarrheal symptoms are resolved for at least 24 hours.
- **Salmonella Typhi (Typhoid fever):** Children under 5 years of age must be out of school or childcare until the diarrhea stops and 3 lab tests taken at least 24 hours apart test negative for *Salmonella Typhi*. If antibiotics were prescribed the stool cultures must be collected at least 1 week after antibiotic completion.

Shigella:

- **Children in childcare and students under the age of 5** must be removed for 24 hours or more after diarrhea has stopped and at least one stool culture is negative. If antibiotics were prescribed the tests must be collected at least 48 hours after antibiotic completion.
- **Students 5 years of age or older thru grade 12:** Remove until diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours or more: provided that the student has good handwashing and is able to self-toilet. A **parent note** is required to return to school or childcare.
 - A student with questionable or poor hand hygiene may be required to have at least one Shigella-negative stool culture and to be diarrhea-free for at least 24 hours prior to returning. If antibiotics were prescribed, stool cultures must be collected 48 or more hours after the antibiotics are completed.

Campylobacter, Enteropathogenic E.coli (EPEC), Enterotoxigenic E. coli (ETEC), Giardia, Norovirus, Rotavirus, and most types of Salmonella:

Your child may return with a **parent note** after diarrhea stops for 24 hours.

Fever only

Keep your child home for a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher. The school will specify when your child can return based on the situation.

Flu, Influenza or Influenza-Like Illness (ILI)

(ILI is defined as an oral temperature of greater than 100° F with a cough and/or sore throat for which there is no other known cause)

A child with the flu will be excluded for a fever of 100 degrees with cough and/or sore throat until he or she is fever free for at least 24 hours without any fever medicines.

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

Children with hand, foot, and mouth disease should be out of school or childcare while they have fever, above normal drooling, trouble swallowing, or are too sick to do normal school or childcare activities.

Head Lice

Children with crawling lice or with nits (eggs) 1/4 inch or closer to the scalp may be sent home at the end of the day, if head-to-head contact with other children can be avoided. Otherwise, they may be sent home immediately.

Your child may return with a **parent note** after one treatment with an over the counter or prescription lice-killing product, if there are no active lice crawling on your child's head. The school or childcare may also allow children to return after crawling lice and nits have been removed from the hair by combing or heat treatment methods.

The school or childcare should check your child's scalp for any newly hatched lice 7–10 days after treatment. If any are present, your child will have to be removed and retreated for lice in order to come back to school or childcare.

Haemophilus influenzae Type B (Hib)

Children with a Hib infection are excluded until cleared by a **healthcare provider** to return to school or childcare.

Hepatitis A

Children are excluded until 1 week after the start of illness or jaundice. The child may return with a **medical note** 1 week after the start of the jaundice or positive specimen collection in the asymptomatic child.

Impetigo

Your child may return after receiving antibiotics for 24 hours, as long as the sores have stopped oozing and are starting to get smaller, or if the sores can be covered completely with a watertight bandage. A **parent note** is needed to return to school or childcare.

Measles (Rubeola)

Children with measles can return with a **medical note** 4 days after the rash begins, if they have no fever and feel well enough to participate in regular school or childcare activities.

Meningitis

A child with signs of meningitis (high fever, rash, stiff neck) must remain out of school or childcare until a **healthcare provider** provides a medical note stating that the child may return.

Mumps

Children with mumps can return with a **medical note** 5 days after the beginning of swelling.

Pink-eye / Conjunctivitis

Children with pinkeye do not have to stay home unless there is a recommendation from the health department or the child's healthcare provider. A child with pinkeye should see a healthcare provider if he or she has fever or severe eye pain. Antibiotics are not required for return.

Rash with fever, behavioral changes or other symptoms

Children who have a quickly spreading rash or a rash with fever or behavior change are to be removed from school or childcare immediately. A **medical note** is required to return.

Ringworm

Children with **ringworm of the scalp** must remain out of school or childcare from the end of the day until they have begun treatment with a prescription oral antifungal medication. Your child may return with a medical note.

Children with **ringworm of the body** must remain out of school or childcare from the end of the day until they have begun treatment with a topical antifungal medication. Your child may return with a **parent note**.

Rubella / German Measles

Keep your child home until 7 days after rash starts. The child may return with a **medical note**.

Scabies

Keep children with scabies out of school or childcare until treatment/medication has been completed (usually overnight). A **medical note** is required to return.

Shingles

Keep children home who have shingles sores or blisters that cannot be covered. Your child may return with a **parent note** once the sores are dried or scabbed.

Skin Infections from Staph or Strep (includes MRSA) or Herpes Gladiatorum

Children may attend school or childcare if the sores are covered with clothes or dressings, and if the drainage does not come through clothes or dressing.

"Strep Throat" / Streptococcal Pharyngitis

Your child with "Strep throat" can return to school or childcare with a **medical note** 12 hours after starting antibiotics, if there is no fever.

Tuberculosis (TB)

Keep children who are diagnosed by a healthcare provider with active (infectious) TB home until the healthcare provider treating the TB writes a **medical note** that says that the child is no longer contagious.

Vomiting

Keep young children home when vomiting has occurred 2 or more times in a 24 hour period. All children should stay home for any green or bloody vomit. If the child is vomiting and also has not urinated for 8 hours the child should stay home.

Whooping Cough / Pertussis

Children with whooping cough can return to school or childcare with a **medical note** after completing 5 days of antibiotics.

If there is an outbreak of disease in your child's school or childcare, DHEC may change the exclusions found in this document in order to stop the spread of disease.

If your child has not received immunizations to protect against diseases like Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German measles), or Chickenpox, he or she may need to be removed from school or childcare if there are cases of these illnesses in the school or childcare. Your school nurse will provide more information if there is an exposure or outbreak.

OK to Attend

Children with the following conditions do not have to be excluded from school or out-of home childcare, if they feel well enough to participate in regular activities:

- Canker Sores
- Chronic Hepatitis B or C
- Colds or coughs, without fever or other signs of illness
- Cold Sores
- Croup
- Cytomegalovirus (your child may need to stay out of PE and sports)
- Disease spread by mosquitos for example Malaria and West Nile Virus
- Diseases spread by ticks: Babesiosis, Ehrlichiosis, Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Tularemia
- Ear Infection
- Fifth Disease
- HIV infection
- Mononucleosis (your child may need to stay out of PE and sports)
- MRSA, if child is only a carrier
- Pinworms
- Rash without fever or behavior change
- Roseola, once the fever is gone
- Thrush
- Urinary Tract Infection
- Warts, including Molluscum contagiosum
- Yeast Diaper Rash

Help your child stay healthy and ready to learn.

We hope that your child never has to miss school or childcare because of illness or disease. The best protection from disease is prevention. You can help prevent many illnesses by making sure your child receives immunizations and by making sure your child washes his or her hands often.



DHEC Bureau of Disease Control
Division of Acute Disease Epidemiology
2100 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201
Phone: 803.898.0861 / Fax: 803.898.0897

scdhec.gov/health/child-teen-health/school-exclusion