Is my child too sick to attend school, childcare or camp?



People often wonder what makes a child too sick to go to school, childcare or camp. **The spread of common illnesses such as flu and colds, gastrointestinal illnesses (diarrhea), pink eye (conjunctivitis) and strep can be limited when children and adults stay home and away from other people when they're sick.**

Keep your child home when they have:

- **Diarrhea** ***Three or more loose stools in a 24-hour period.***
- **Vomiting**
- **Fever 100.4°F or over**
- **Other flu-like symptoms, such as chills or body aches.**

WHEN TO RETURN AFTER DIARRHEA, VOMITING OR FEVER

Children experiencing diarrhea, vomiting or fever should remain home until they have been symptom-free without the aid of medication for at least 24 hours.

Keep your child home AND contact your child's doctor when they have:

- **Pink eye (Conjunctivitis)**
  - If the infection is bacterial and antibiotics are prescribed by a doctor, your child should stay home until they have been taking their antibiotics for 24 hours.
  - If your child is not on antibiotics, stay home until the doctor releases your child.

- **Strep throat, painful swallowing, swollen tonsils, etc.** You should keep your child home until BOTH of the following have occurred:
  - It has been at least 24 hours since their first dose of antibiotics, AND
  - Your child has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.

- **A productive cough** Your child should stay home. The Health Department recommends that a child experiencing a productive cough seek medical care to determine appropriate testing and treatment.

- **Positive COVID-19 test** ***Regardless of vaccination status***
  - Your child should stay home until Georgia Department of Public Health isolation release requirements are met.
  - COVID-19 Isolation Guidance dph.georgia.gov/isolation-contact.

- **Rashes or sores** Your child should stay home until a doctor releases your child.
  - Rash in conjunction with fever
  - A rash or draining sores that can not be covered
  - Mouth sores with drooling

Tell the school nurse or administrator when your child has been cleared by their doctor.

If you aren't sure whether your child should attend school, childcare or camp, contact the school's nurse or administrator for help.

You can help prevent the spread of illness.

- **Wash hands.** Teach children to wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are a good alternative when soap and water are not available, but they are not as good as hand washing.

- **Cover coughs.** Teach children to cover coughs and sneezes with their inner elbow or a tissue. Always wash hands after coughing or sneezing.

- **Don't share personal items.** Items such as drinking cups, utensils, towels, clothes, and hair care items such as brushes may contain germs that can make you sick.

- **Mask when appropriate.** Follow public health recommendations.

Have questions? Call our Epi Line at 404-508-7870. After hours, call 1-866-PUB-HLTH (1-866-782-4584).

DEKALB COUNTY Board of Health

This information was adapted from www.choa.org/parent-resources/everyday-illnesses/too-sick-for-school and Common Communicable Diseases of Children, DCBOH, 2015

For more information, including services and locations, visit dekalbhealth.net.