

“NASN Guidelines For Keeping A Sick Child At Home

Should I keep my child home or send him or her to school?

Consider keeping your child home if he or she:

- Has a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Has been vomiting
- Has symptoms that prevent him or her from participating in school, such as:
 - Excessive tiredness or lack of appetite
 - Productive coughing, sneezing
 - Headache, body aches, earache
 - Sore throat

A minor sore throat is usually not a problem, but a severe sore throat could be strep throat even if there is no fever. Other symptoms of strep throat in children are headache and stomach upset. Contact your pediatrician as your child needs a special test to determine if it is strep throat.

Keep your child home until his or her fever has been gone for 24 hours without medication. Colds can be contagious for at least 48 hours. Returning to school too soon may slow the recovery process and expose others unnecessarily to illness.

Does my child have the flu?

- The flu is serious! Call your pediatrician at the first sign of flu symptoms, which typically come on **suddenly**, including:
 - High fever
 - Chills
 - Head ache, body aches, ear ache
 - Nausea, vomiting
 - Dry cough

If you're unsure about the best way to treat your child's cold or flu, ask your school nurse, doctor, pharmacist, or other healthcare provider.

How do I make my child feel better?

- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest and put limits on TV watching
- Encourage fluids; like water, soup, juice and ice
- Help your child relax by reading him a story and giving him plenty of TLC
- Consider using a cool humidifier
- When used as directed, children's cough and cold medicines help relieve cough and cold symptoms while your child is getting better. Read and follow the directions carefully and give the exact recommended dose for the child's age. Do not use over the counter cough and cold medications for children under the age of four in the U.S.

How can I prevent my child from getting a cold?

- Teach your child to wash his or her hands frequently using plenty of soap and warm water. Proper hand-washing should take about 20 seconds or the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice
- Teach your child to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or their sleeve
- Keep the child's environment tobacco free
- Try to minimize the time your child spends with other children who have cough or cold symptoms
- Pack easy-to-use products like disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizers in your child's backpack to use when he or she is at school
- Keep an annual well-child exam to follow changes in your child's health
- Keep all of your child's immunizations up-to-date (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines now recommend a flu vaccine for most children aged 6 months up to their 19th birthday)
- Serve a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables. Giving a daily vitamin may be recommended by your pediatrician
- After your child is feeling better, clean all surfaces; wash the bedding and air out the room
- Keep surfaces like door knobs, phones, remote controls, toys, and keyboards clean
- Always make sure to consult your school nurse or doctor if you have any questions