

Too Sick for School?

IDPH offer guidelines for keeping children out of the classroom

With school in full swing in most parts of Iowa, parents once again face that early morning decision – is my child too sick for school? School districts often provide guidelines for keeping children out of the classroom and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) encourages parents to keep their children home from school when ill not only for their own child's health, but to avoid the spread of disease to other students.

“There are times when a parent can clearly see their child is too ill for school,” said IDPH Medical Director, Dr. Patricia Quinlisk. “Other times, it’s not so clear. While we understand the challenges parents who work outside the home face when trying to accommodate a child who needs to stay home from school, it’s so important that children who have a contagious illness don’t come to class to stop them from spreading whatever they have to the other children. ”

In general, symptoms that indicate a day home from school is needed and consulting with the child's health care provider is appropriate include:

- fever (temperature higher than 100.4 degrees F. when taken by mouth);
- severe sore throat that lasts more than 48 hours, especially when accompanied by a fever;
- a significant rash, particularly when other symptoms are present;
- sores in the mouth with drooling;
- red eyes (pink eye);
- skin infection with erupting sores;
- severe ear pain;
- an uncontrolled cough or difficulty breathing;
- diarrhea;
- vomiting more than 2 times in 24 hours;
- severe headache, especially with a fever or
- any symptoms that suggest a more serious illness, such as sluggishness, persistent crying, or irritability.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children may be allowed to return to school after symptoms are gone for at least 24 hours.

*IDPH= Iowa Department of Public Health