

# Kids' Health and Safety

## When to Miss School

School starts in an hour, and your child says she doesn't feel well. Should you send her/him to school or keep her/him home? "Ask yourself, 'If my child were healthy, would I want her/him near someone with these symptoms?'" advises Robert Hoekelman, M.D., contributing editor of *The Merck Manual of Medical Information—Home Edition*, who offers these guidelines to help you decide what to do. Of course, if symptoms last longer than 24 hours or worsen, call your pediatrician.

Symptom	Keep Your Child Home If:
Fever	She/he has a morning temperature of 100° F or higher, or her temperature is below 100° but she is achy, pale, or tired.
Tummyache	She/he has had two or more episodes of vomiting or diarrhea or has had one in the past 24 hours and feels tired or ill.
Sneezing or Runny Nose	She/he is sneezing a lot, and her nose won't stop running.
Sore Throat	She/he has tender swollen glands and a fever of 100° or higher.
Cough	She/he coughs frequently, coughs up phlegm, or her cough sounds like a bark or is accompanied by a sore throat or wheezing.
Earache	Her/his pain is constant or severe—a sign of otitis media.
Rash	The rash blisters, develops pus, or is uncomfortable, which would signal chicken pox or impetigo.

From our experience we have learned that sick children seldom, if ever, gain anything by attending school. They are much better off at home where they are most likely to get the necessary care for recovery and early return to school. Keeping ill children at home also protects other children, their parents, and the school staff.

A child should be kept home at least 24 hours after a fever and 24 hours after starting antibiotics. REMINDER: If your child needs to take medication at school, you need to send a form signed by you and the health care provider with the medication.

Please call me if you have any questions.

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