

When to Keep Your Child Home from School

Guidance for Common Signs and Symptoms of Illness

Children should attend school every day and may attend school with mild or improving symptoms. This guidance, based on new CDPH recommendations, will help you decide whether your child is too sick to attend school.

Overall not feeling well

Stay home if any new illness or symptom prevents your child from doing routine activities. They may return when feeling better and can participate in school. Call your medical provider/doctor if your child needs medical care, but a doctor's note is generally not required to return to school.

If your child has been diagnosed by a doctor with a specific illness, or develops similar symptoms after an exposure to a communicable disease, follow instructions from your doctor or the health department for when your child may return to school (for example, Strep Throat or COVID-19.) Please report diagnosed illnesses to your school office

Is it COVID-19? (follow COVID-19 reporting requirements)

Test using an OTC test when there are symptoms of COVID-19. If the test is positive, keep your child at home and report the positive to your school. A SCUSD Contact Tracer will contact you to provide return guidance.



Abdominal pain/stomachache

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Pain is severe enough that child has difficulty participating in routine activities
- Pain starts after an injury - get medical attention
- Bloody or black stools - get medical attention
- With diarrhea (see Diarrhea) or vomiting (see Vomiting)



Cough and cold symptoms

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Cough is severe or child cannot catch breath after coughing
- If cough is suspected to be associated with asthma and cannot be controlled by the medications that the school has been instructed to use

Note: Recommend wearing a mask if returning to school with mild symptoms.



Diarrhea

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Stool not contained in the diaper or toilet
- Stool looks bloody or black - get medical attention.

Note: Encourage frequent handwashing. If there is concern for an outbreak (more persons with diarrhea than would be expected in the setting for that time of year), Health Services will contact the local health department for guidance.



Difficult or noisy breathing

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Wheezing that is new for the child or cannot be controlled by medications the school has been instructed to use for known conditions (e.g., asthma plan)
- Skin or lips seem purple, blue, or grey - call 9-1-1.
- Rapid breathing or increased effort to breathe, difficulty speaking - get medical attention

Note: Seek medical attention for any of these if new symptoms.



Earache

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Pain prevents participation in routine activities



Eye irritation, pink eye, or drainage

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Problems seeing (vision changes)
- Injury to the eye - seek medical attention
- Pain or discomfort the child cannot tolerate

Note: Encourage frequent handwashing. Pink eye is most often caused by a virus, and children with viral pink eye typically get better without treatment. Eye irritation can also result from allergies or chemical exposures (e.g., air pollution, smoke, or swimming in chlorinated pool water). Staying home from school is not necessary.



Fever

Stay home if fever over 100.4 degrees F or higher

Return when: At least 24 hours have passed since a fever of 100.4 degrees F or higher has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication e.g., Tylenol®, Advil®, Motrin® (acetaminophen or ibuprofen), other symptoms are improving, and the child can participate comfortably in routine activities.



Headache, stiff or painful neck

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Concussion symptoms: after injury to the head and is severe or associated with vomiting, vision changes, behavior change, or confusion - seek medical attention
- Possible infection: Stiff neck, headache and fever can be symptoms of meningitis, a potentially serious infection - seek medical attention.



Rash or itching

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Oozing, open wounds, open blisters, or infection that cannot be covered.
- Rapidly spreading dark red or purple rash - get medical attention
- Tender, red area of skin, rapidly increasing in size or tenderness.
- Possible chickenpox or measles - see a healthcare provider for diagnosis

Note: For diagnosed conditions, follow the advice of the healthcare provider. For conditions such as, impetigo, ringworm, scabies, and pinworms, may return after starting appropriate treatment.



Sore throat and/or mouth sores

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Fever
- Inability to swallow, excessive drooling, muffled voice - get medical attention
- Breathing difficulties - get medical attention

Note: Recommend a mask if returning with mild symptoms. Most sore throats are viral infections. If diagnosed with strep throat (bacterial), they should take antibiotics for at least 12 hours before returning.



Vomiting

May attend school unless the child has one of the following:

- Vomiting has occurred 2 or more times in 24 hours.
- Vomit appears green or bloody - get medical attention
- Recent head injury - get medical attention or call 911

For more information see the SCUSD Health Services website at:

www.scusd.edu/when-keep-your-child-home-school

Guidance updated 7/18/24 based on CDPH Public Health Guidance for TK–12 Schools and Child Care Settings <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Schools/SymptomGuidance.aspx>

