

# Is My Child Too Ill For School?

When your child is unwell, it can be hard deciding whether to keep them off school. These simple guidelines should help.

Not every illness needs to keep your child from school. If you keep your child away from school, be sure to inform the school on the first day of their absence.

Use common sense when deciding whether or not your child is too ill to attend school. Ask yourself the following questions.

- Is my child well enough to do the activities of the school day? If not, keep your child at home.
- Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff? If so, keep your child at home.
- Would I take a day off work if I had this condition? If so, keep your child at home.

**Common Conditions** - If your child is ill, it's likely to be due to one of a few minor health conditions. Whether you send your child to school will depend on how severe you think the illness is. Use this guidance to help you make that judgment. Remember: if you are concerned about your child's health, consult a health professional.

- **Cough and cold.** A child with a minor cough or cold may attend school. If the cold is accompanied by a raised temperature, shivers or drowsiness, the child should stay off school, visit the GP and return to school 24 hours after they start to feel better. If your child has a more severe and long-lasting cough, consult your GP. They can give guidance on whether your child should stay off school. Get more information in [Common cold](#).
- **Raised temperature.** If your child has a raised temperature, they shouldn't attend school. They can return 24 hours after they start to feel better. Learn more in [Feverish illness in children](#).
- **Rash.** Skin rashes can be the first sign of many infectious illnesses, such as chickenpox and measles. Children with these conditions shouldn't attend school. If your child has a rash, check with your GP or practice nurse before sending them to school. [Watch this slideshow of childhood illnesses](#) to help you recognise your child's rash.
- **Headache.** A child with a minor headache doesn't usually need to be kept off school. If the headache is more severe or is accompanied by other symptoms, such as raised temperature or drowsiness, then keep the child off school and consult your GP. Read more about what to do about [headaches in children](#).
- **Vomiting and diarrhoea.** Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should definitely be kept off school until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have gone. Most cases of [diarrhoea and vomiting in children](#) get better without treatment, but if symptoms persist, consult your GP.
- **Sore throat.** A sore throat alone doesn't have to keep a child from school. But if it's accompanied by a raised temperature, your child should stay at home. Read more about [sore throat](#).
- **Chickenpox.** If your child has chickenpox, keep them off school until all their spots have crusted over. Read more about [chickenpox](#).

## Tell the school

It's important to inform the school if your child is going to be absent. On the first day of your child's illness, telephone the school to tell them that your child will be staying at home. The school may ask about the nature of the illness and how long you expect the absence to last.

If it becomes clear that your child will be away for longer than expected, phone the school as soon as possible to explain this.