

When Your Child Doesn't Feel Well!

Many parents struggle with the decision of whether or not to send their possibly sick child to school. Juggling the demands of work and of their student's academic needs may make the decision even more difficult. It's tempting to give a dose of Tylenol or Motrin and hope for the best; however, school age children are especially good at spreading germs and children cannot learn as effectively if they are sick. How do you know if it's just a cold or if your child is really too sick to go to school? Here are some strategies to guide you through these murky waters:

FEVER:

- Using an accurate thermometer, check your child for fever before deciding to send them to school. Touching their forehead to feel for warmth is not a reliable method of fever detection.
- Do not send a child to school with a fever of 100 or more. They will feel increasing miserable throughout the day and are most infectious when they are febrile. Doses of Tylenol or Motrin will not decrease their contagiousness.
- Montgomery Township School District in consultation with MTSD physician recommend a student must be fever-free without the use of fever reducing medication for 24 hours before they can return to school. If your child is sent home from school with a fever it is recommended they stay at home the following day even if they are fever free.

VOMITING/DIARRHEA:

- Do not send your child to school if they are vomiting or have diarrhea. If your child begins to vomit or experience diarrhea they must stay at home. Do not assume because your child feels better after vomiting that they are better.
- Students must be free of vomiting and/or diarrhea for 24 hours and able to tolerate a normal diet before they can return to school.

POSITIVE THROAT CULTURES, EYE DRAINAGE & RASHES

- Strep throat is a highly contagious condition caused by bacteria. If your child complains of a sore throat, fever, and often a headache and stomach ache, they should see a doctor for a diagnosis and treatment. If the strep culture is positive, your child can return to school after 24 hours of antibiotics and are fever free without fever reducing medication.
- Pink Eye; caused by infection with a virus or bacteria is highly contagious. The eye will be reddened and a yellow discharge is usually present. Eyelashes may be stuck together when your child wakes up. Consult with your child's doctor to see if antibiotic eye drops are indicated. If antibiotic eye drops are prescribed your child must be on them for 24 hours before returning to school and symptoms have subsided.
- Rashes can be tricky to interpret. Consult your child's doctor prior to sending them to school to discuss treatment options and length of time your child should be out of school.
- Any draining cuts, abrasions, or open rashes must be covered with an occlusive bandage prior to coming to school.
- Please notify your child's school health office if your child is diagnosed with any of the above.

COUGHS AND COLDS:

- Check your child's temperature before deciding to send them to school. If your child is not coughing, does not complain of trouble breathing and does not have a fever it's generally okay to send them to school. The health office does not stock nasal or chest decongestants, cough suppressants, throat lozenges, or allergy medications so make sure you address that prior to putting them on the bus.
- Check with your child's physician as to the best way to manage your child's cold or cough.
- Please do not give Tylenol or Motrin to mask chills or body aches and then send them to school. If your child is feeling badly enough to require this level of intervention, a day of rest at home is in order.
- Persistent coughing can indicate a worsening cold, asthma or secondary infection such as pneumonia. Please consult your child's physician for advice. Children with persistent cough should be kept at home.

All of these illnesses can spread easily and rapidly in school and at home. Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do and teach your child to do to help prevent the spread of infection. If you are in doubt as to whether to send your child to school, please call your child's doctor before doing so.