

Is my child too ill for school?

It can be tricky deciding whether or not to keep your child off school, nursery or playgroup when they're unwell.

But there are [government guidelines](#) for schools and nurseries that say when children should be kept off school and when they shouldn't.

If you do keep your child at home, it's important to phone the school or nursery on the first day. Let them know that they won't be in and give them the reason.

If your child is well enough to go to school but has an infection that could be passed on, such as a cold sore or head lice, let their teacher know.

Chickenpox

If your child has [chickenpox](#), keep them off school until all the spots have crusted over.

This is usually about 5 days after the spots first appeared.

Cold sores

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have a [cold sore](#).

Encourage them not to touch the blister or kiss anyone while they have the cold sore, or to share things like cups and towels.

Conjunctivitis

You don't need to keep your child away from school if they have [conjunctivitis](#).

Do get advice from your pharmacist. Encourage your child not to rub their eyes and to wash their hands regularly.

Coughs and colds

It's fine to send your child to school with a minor [cough](#) or [cold](#). But if they have a fever, keep them off school until the fever goes.

Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues and to wash their hands regularly.

Ear infection

If your child has an [ear infection](#) and a fever or severe earache, keep them off school until they're feeling better or their fever goes away.

Fever

If your child has a fever, keep them off school until the [fever](#) goes away.

Hand, foot and mouth disease

If your child has [hand, foot and mouth disease](#) but seems well enough to go to school, there's no need to keep them off.

Encourage your child to throw away any used tissues straight away and to wash their hands regularly.

Head lice and nits

There's no need to keep your child off school if they have head lice.

See [how to get rid of them](#).

Impetigo

If your child has [impetigo](#), they'll need antibiotic treatment from the GP.

Keep them off school until all the sores have crusted over and healed, or for 48 hours after they start antibiotic treatment.

Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly and not to share towels, cups and so on with other children at school.

Ringworm

If your child has [ringworm](#), see your pharmacist unless it's on their scalp, in which case you should see the GP.

It's fine for your child to go to school once they have started treatment.

Scarlet fever

If your child has [scarlet fever](#), they'll need treatment with antibiotics from the GP. Otherwise they'll be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks. Your child can go back to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.

Slapped cheek syndrome (fifth disease)

You don't need to keep your child off school if they have [slapped cheek syndrome](#) because once the rash appears, they're no longer infectious.

If you suspect your child has slapped cheek syndrome, take them to the GP and let their school know if they're diagnosed with it.

Sore throat

You can still send your child to school if they have a [sore throat](#). But if they also have a fever, they should stay at home until it goes away.

Threadworms

You don't need to keep your child off school if they have [threadworms](#).

Speak to your pharmacist, who can recommend a treatment.

Vomiting and diarrhoea

Children with [diarrhoea or vomiting](#) should stay away from school for 2 days after their symptoms have gone.

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<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>