

When students miss too many days of school, they fall behind and struggle to keep up with their classmates. Whether the days missed are due to illness, truancy or for any other reason, the result for the student is the same — learning time is lost. Children and adolescents will get sick at times and may need to stay at home, but we want to work with you to help minimize the number of days your student is absent from school.

### Missed Days Add Up Quickly!

- Just a few missed days a month adds up to several school weeks missed in a year.
- Both excused and unexcused absences can make it more difficult for your child to keep up with other students, especially in math and reading.
- Kindergarten and first grade are critical for your child. Missing school during these early years makes it more difficult for children to learn in later years and they often have trouble reading by the end of third grade.

### Work with Your Child and Your School

- Ensure that your child comes to school every day unless an absence is necessary. This will help your child succeed.
- Make sure that the school staff is aware if your child has a chronic illness so that assistance can be provided if needed. Each school year, include information about your child's chronic illness on the care card and the school emergency health information form.
- If your child has asthma, FCPS requires an Asthma Action Plan completed by his or her doctor. If your child needs to carry an inhaler at school, permission should be noted on the Asthma Action Plan. Ensure that all supplies (inhaler, spacer, etc.) needed to manage your child's asthma are at the school.
- If your child has diabetes, FCPS requires a Diabetes Medical Management Plan be completed by his or her doctor. Ensure that all supplies (insulin, blood sugar meter, test strips) needed to manage your child's diabetes are at the school.
- **Keep an open line of communication with your school public health nurse, school staff and teachers. The more the school knows about your child's health needs, the better prepared everyone will be to work together to support your child.**

### Helpful Ideas:

- Make medical and dental appointments in the late afternoon so your child can attend as much of the school day as possible.
- If your child must miss school, make sure you get his or her homework assignments and ensure that the work is completed and turned in.
- Call the school as soon as you know your child will be absent and tell school staff why your child will be out and for how long.
- Be prepared to get a doctor's note when requested by school personnel.

### FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION VISIT:

FCPS Attendance Information  
[www.fcps.edu/attendance](http://www.fcps.edu/attendance)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)


The American Academy of Pediatrics  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

The Fairfax County Go to Guide  
[www.fcps.edu/resources/gotoguide](http://www.fcps.edu/resources/gotoguide)



# When Should I Keep My Child Home?

The suggestions below are for children 5 to 18 years of age.  
Recommendations may be different for infants and younger children.

Symptoms and Illnesses	Should I Keep My Child Home?
<b>Parent is Sick, Stressed, Hospitalized</b>	<b>NO</b> - If you are sick, your child still needs to attend school. Your illness does not excuse your child from attending. Plan ahead for these days. Ask a neighbor, relative or spouse to take your child to and from school.
<b>Chronic Illnesses (Asthma, Diabetes, Sickle Cell, Epilepsy etc.)</b> Chronic illness is a long-lasting condition that can be controlled but not cured.	<b>NO</b> - As long as your child's symptoms are controlled, your child should attend school. School personnel are trained to assist children with chronic illnesses and related health care requirements.
<b>Child Doesn't Want to go to School</b> Frequent crying, fear, anger, not wanting to socialize, behavior change, stomachache, nausea (These can be signs of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, or fear)	<b>NO</b> - You should keep your child in school but try to determine what is causing the changes. Talk to school personnel and consult a health care provider. Your child may be experiencing bullying or trauma, may be behind in schoolwork or not getting along with others. Persistent Indicators of distress may require support from school personnel or health care professionals.
<b>Cold Symptoms</b> Stuffy nose/runny nose, sneezing, mild cough, earache	<b>NO</b> - If your child is able to participate in school activities school should be attended.
<b>Head Lice</b> Intense itching of the head; may feel like something is moving	<b>NO</b> - Your child can be in school if an initial treatment of shampooing of hair with a product for lice has been completed.
<b>Menstrual Issues</b>	<b>NO</b> - In most cases, menstrual issues (periods) can be managed at school. If severe pain is interfering with your child attending school, consult with a health care provider.
<b>Strains, Sprains and Pains</b>	<b>NO</b> - If there is no known injury and your child is able to function (walk, talk, eat), school should be attended. If pain is severe or doesn't stop, consult a health care provider.
<b>Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)</b> The white of the eye is pink and there is a thick yellow/green discharge.	<b>YES</b> - If there is discharge from the eye, your child must be evaluated by a healthcare provider before returning to school. If diagnosed with bacterial conjunctivitis, the child should remain home while symptomatic or until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment has been completed.
<b>Coughing</b> Severe, uncontrolled, rapid coughing, wheezing, or difficulty breathing	<b>YES</b> - Keep your child home and contact a health care provider. If symptoms are due to asthma, provide treatment according to your child's Asthma Action Plan. When symptoms are controlled, send your child to school.
<b>Diarrhea</b> Frequent, loose or watery stool may mean illness but can also be caused by food and medication	<b>YES</b> - If, in addition to diarrhea, your child acts ill, has a fever or is vomiting, please keep your child home until the diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours. If stool is bloody, if the child has abdominal pain, fever or vomiting, consult with a health care provider.
<b>Fever</b> Fever usually means illness, especially if your child has a fever of 100.4 or higher as well as other symptoms like behavior change, rash, sore throat, vomiting etc.	<b>YES</b> - If your child has a fever of 100.4 or higher, keep them at home until his or her fever is below 100.4 for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. If the fever does not go away after 2-3 days or is 102.0 or higher, consult with a health care provider.
<b>Rash With Fever</b>	<b>YES</b> - Keep your child home if they have a rash with a fever. If a rash spreads quickly, is not healing, or has open weeping wounds, you should keep your child at home and have your child seen by a health care provider.
<b>Strep Throat</b> Sore throat, fever, stomachache, and red, swollen tonsils	<b>YES</b> - Keep your child at home for the first 24 hours after an antibiotic is begun. Your child may return to school when they have completed at least 24 hours of the antibiotic use, is fever free for 24 hours and symptoms are improving
<b>Vomiting</b> Child has vomited 2 or more times in a 24-hour period. If vomiting is associated with diarrhea or fever, please reference the recommendations for those symptoms (diarrhea, fever).	<b>YES</b> - Keep your child at home until the vomiting has stopped for 24 hours. If vomiting continues, contact a health care provider.
<b>Communicable Diseases</b> <b>COVID-19</b> - fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste/smell, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, runny nose/congestion, diarrhea, nausea/ vomiting, headaches	<b>YES</b> - Keep your child at home until completion of at least five days of isolation. Additional guidance can be found on our <a href="#">Health and Safety Guidance document</a> .
<b>Communicable Diseases</b> <b>Chicken Pox</b> - fever, headache, stomachache or sore throat, then a red itchy skin rash develops on the stomach first and then limbs and face <b>Measles &amp; Rubella (German Measles)</b> - swollen glands, rash that starts behind ears then the face and the rest of the body, sore joints, mild fever and cough, red eyes <b>Mumps</b> - fever, headache, muscle aches, loss of appetite, swollen tender salivary glands <b>Pertussis (Whooping Cough)</b> - many rapid coughs followed by a high-pitched "whoop", vomiting, very tired	<b>YES</b> - Keep your child at home until a health care provider has determined that your child is not contagious.  <b>Fairfax County PUBLIC SCHOOLS</b> ENGAGE • INSPIRE • THRIVE