



## FAQ: When to Stay Home from School or Childcare

### What is a communicable disease?

Communicable diseases are infections that spread through the air, through food, by touch or bodily fluids. Some illnesses have mild symptoms while others may be more severe and even life-threatening. Children are exposed to a variety of communicable diseases in school and childcare settings during normal activities. It is important to take appropriate actions to control the spread of these infections, and a crucial part of this is keeping your child home when they are sick.

### When does my child need to stay home from school or childcare?

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell how sick a child is. Here are a few guidelines to help you make the best decision for the health and safety of your child and those around them. Stay home and consider contacting your health care provider if your child is experiencing any of the following

- Fever (temperature over 100.4 °F)
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Persistent coughing/difficulty breathing
- Sore throat with difficulty swallowing
- Unidentified or spreading rash
- Mouth or skin sore that are weeping
- Extreme fatigue or lethargy
- Severe pain or severe headache

Continue to monitor your child's symptoms and call **911** for any illness that are life threatening or needs to be treated right away.

### When can my child return to school or childcare?

Children need to be free from fever, diarrhea, and vomiting for at least **24 hours** (without the use of medication) before they are cleared to return to school or childcare. They need to show significant improvement in symptoms with a return to normal activity level. There are some [reportable conditions](#) that require additional measures before returning to school, which may include negative test results, antibiotics, other treatments, or isolation periods. Schools or childcare facilities may also have their own policies for when to stay home or return. During outbreaks of communicable diseases, there may be further steps to control the spread of illness in the school and childcare setting. ([WAC 246-110](#))

### How can we prevent the spread of communicable disease?



#### Stay Home

Getting rest and fluids will help your child recover and prevent the spread of contagious illness



#### Childhood Vaccine

Vaccines have eliminated or greatly reduced many childhood diseases. Make sure your child is up to date on [immunizations](#)



#### Respiratory Etiquette

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when you cough or sneeze. Consider wearing a mask while you are sick



#### Proper Handwashing

Wash hand for 20 seconds with soap especially after using the toilet or changing diapers, and before preparing food or eating