Keeping kids home from school or day care

Mild illness is common among children. Most children will not need to be excluded from school or their usual source of care for mild respiratory tract illnesses. A disease is usually transmitted before symptoms developed in the child. Disease may occur as a result of contact with children who have no symptoms of infection.

The risk of illness can be decreased by following appropriate hand washing procedures on a routine basis.

However, during the course of an identified outbreak of any communicable illness in a childcare setting or school, a child determined to be contributing to transmission of organisms causing the illness may be excluded. In general, the child may be readmitted when the risk of transmission is determined no longer to be present.

Children should be kept out of the child care setting or school for the following:

- Illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in common program activities.
- Illness that results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- Conditions like fever accompanied by behavior changes; persistent crying; lethargy; difficult breathing; irritability; or a quickly spreading rash.
- Diarrhea that contains blood or mucus.
- Persistent abdominal pain that continues for longer than two hours) or intermittent abdominal pain associated with fever or dehydration.
- Mouth sores associated with drooling, unless the child's physician or local health department authority states that the child is non-infectious.
- Rash with fever or behavioral change, until a physician has determined the illness is not a communicable disease.

- Vomiting two or more times during the previous 24 hours, unless the vomiting is determined to be caused by a non-communicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
- Hepatitis A virus infection, until 1 week after onset of illness or jaundice (if symptoms are mild).
- Impetigo skin infection, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
• **Pertussis**, until 5 days of appropriate antimicrobial therapy have been completed.

• **Rubella**, until 6 days after onset of rash.

• **Salmonella** infection, until diarrhea resolves and three stool cultures test negative for Salmonella typhi; other types of Salmonella infection do not require negative stool culture results.

• **Scabies**, until after treatment has been given.

• **Strep throat** (Streptococcal pharyngitis), until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.

• **Tuberculosis**, until the child’s physician or local health department authority states that the child is non-infectious.

• **Varicella** (chicken pox), until all lesions have dried and crusted (usually 6 days after initial onset of rash).

**When to send them to school**

Most minor illnesses do not constitute a reason for excluding a child from childcare. Examples of illnesses and conditions that do not necessitate exclusion include the following:

• Non-purulent **conjunctivitis** (defined as pink conjunctiva with a clear, watery eye discharge without fever, eye pain, or eyelid redness).

• **Cytomegalovirus** (CMV) infection.

• Chronic **hepatitis B** virus (HBV) infection.

• **Human immunodeficiency virus** (HIV) infection.

• **Parvovirus B19** infection (Fifth disease) in an immunocompetent and otherwise healthy host.

• **Rash** without fever and without behavioral change.

Asymptomatic children with mild loose stools usually do not need to be excluded, except when an infection with Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* or with *Shigella* species has occurred in the child care program or school. Because these infections are transmitted easily and can be severe, exclusion is warranted until results of 2 stool cultures are negative for the organism.

The most important ways to decrease illness among children is to wash hands and/or appropriately exclude children from others in order to prevent future infections.

However, most illnesses do not require exclusion. Following the above recommendations helps to secure a healthy environment for children to learn and thrive in school.