

# To Go to Childcare, or *Not Go* to Childcare, That is the Question!

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Along with winter months come colds, flu, and other illnesses. Often, parents are left with a tough decision about whether or not to send a sick child to daycare or school. For some illnesses, it's nearly impossible to keep them home for the duration, and for others it is necessary that they stay home for at least some period of time.

## Colds

Even healthy children will get an average of 6 to 8 colds each year. A cold is a viral infection of the nose and throat, and spreads easily among children through airborne particles and droplets. A child that is feeling especially tired, cranky, or sick with a cold should stay home. However, if your child's symptoms are mild and he or she is active, a cold should not exclude him or her from attending child care or school. Some helpful treatment tips include:



- To help with congestion and nasal discharge for little ones, place 2-3 drops of normal saline (salt water that can be purchased over the counter) in the nose and gently suction with a bulb syringe.
- For a dry, stuffy nose, using a warm humidifier will help to loosen nasal secretions, making blowing or suctioning the nose a little easier.
- For a fever, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen, and be sure to confirm proper dose for your child. Never give aspirin to a child. Also using over the counter decongestant, such as Dimetapp or Pediacare, helps to relieve symptoms temporarily.
- To ease the aches of cold symptoms, lots of tender loving care and a bowl of warm soup always make kids feel better.
- Frequent hand washing decreases the spread to other members of the family.

## Call your physician if you have questions or:

- if your child has difficulty breathing
- a fever that lasts more than 3 days, or your child acts very fussy or sicker than expected
- you suspect an ear infection or pneumonia
- nasal discharge that lasts 10 days or more
- yellowish to green eye discharge

## Staying Home

Some illnesses do require a child to stay home from child care or school, and some child care centers have their own policies regarding illnesses. The following page contains some basic guidelines.

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## Basic Guidelines:

<b>Symptom</b>	<b>When it's OK to send your child</b>
Fevers, coughing, and vomiting	Once a doctor indicates it's OK
Diarrhea	If it occurs 2-3 times a day and the stool is contained in the diaper
Rashes	Once doctor indicates it is non-infectious
"Pink-eye" with clear or watery discharge	Does not warrant exclusion
"Pink-eye" with yellow or white discharge	24 hours after treatment is started
Strep throat and Impetigo	24 hours after treatment is started
Chicken Pox, Measles and Rubella	6 days after onset of rash, or when all sores are dried and crusted over

Ideally, keeping any sick child home will help to prevent spreading illness. While not always easy to enforce, teaching your child to cover his or her mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing and washing hands frequently are good steps toward prevention.



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