

## Columbia County School System Student Health Services

### Is Your Child Too Sick For School?

Early in the morning it is often difficult to make decisions about whether or not your child should go to school. With minor symptoms you often cannot tell whether it is going to get better or worse during the course of the day.

The main reasons for keeping your child home are:

1. If they are too sick to be comfortable at school
2. If they might spread a contagious disease to other children.

A child should stay at home who has a fever of 100.0 degrees or greater, vomiting more than once, diarrhea, a very frequent cough, persistent pain (ear, stomach, etc.) or wide-spread rash. Most of these problems need to be discussed with your child's health care provider to determine if an office visit is needed. (If your child has frequent complaints of pain that cause school absence, school avoidance should be considered. Bring this to the attention of the child's doctor before a great deal of school has been missed.)

On the other hand, children who don't have a fever and only mild cough, runny nose, or other cold symptoms can be sent to school without any harm to themselves or others.

The following guidelines may help in your decision process:

- **Runny Nose:** A runny nose is the way many children respond to pollen, dust or a cold virus. Minor cold or allergy symptoms should not be a reason to miss school. Many healthy children have as many as 10-12 colds per year, especially in the early school years.
- **Coughing:** A cough, especially if it is persistent during the day, can indicate a worsening of cold or allergy symptoms. It may be a sign of a secondary infection (sinusitis, pneumonia), that may require medical treatment. It may also indicate mild asthma. If your child's cough is worse than you might expect with a common cold, you need to consult your physician. You should do so immediately if the child is not acting right, has a fever, or has any difficulty breathing.
- **Diarrhea and Vomiting:** Diarrhea and vomiting make children very uncomfortable. If diarrhea or vomiting are persistent or are accompanied by fever, rash or general weakness, consult your doctor and keep the child out of school until the illness passes.
- **Fever:** Fever (considered 100.0 degrees) is an important symptom. Especially when a fever occurs along with sore throat, cough nausea or a rash. Your child could have a contagious illness, which could be passed to classmates and teachers. While you can treat the fever and usually make the child feel better temporarily, the cause of the fever and the risk of passing it on to others are still there. Your child is required to be fever free (less than 100.0 oral) for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone before returning to school. Fever should be gone without the use of fever reducing medicine.