

# WHEN TO KEEP SICK CHILDREN HOME FROM SCHOOL

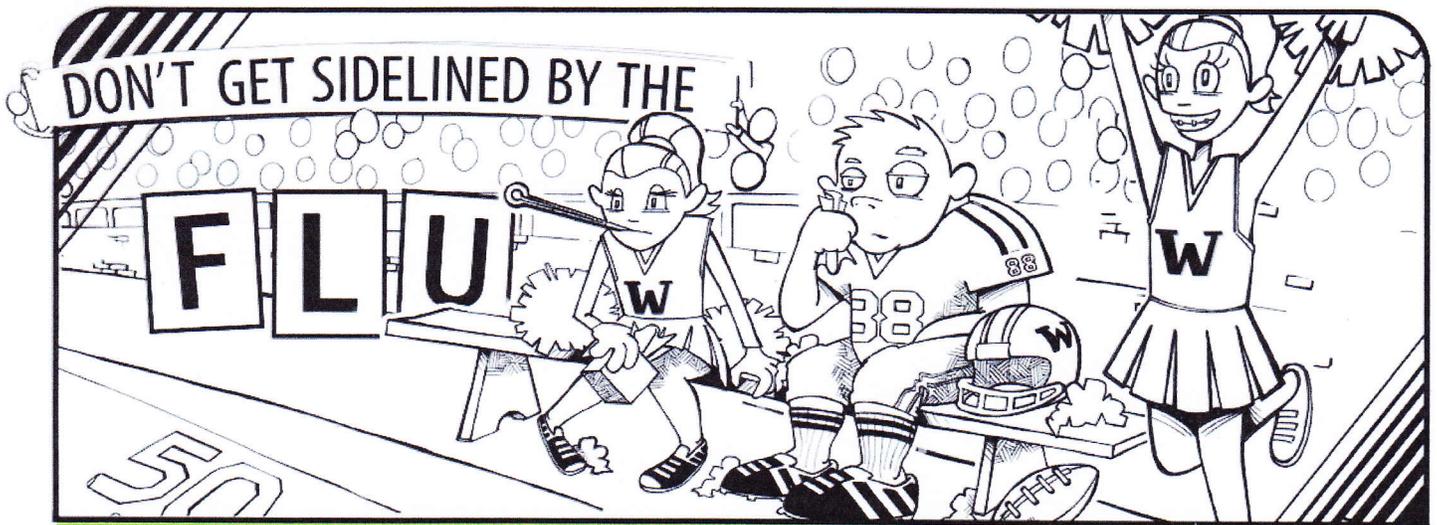
Information compiled from CDC (Centers for Disease Control); DOH (Department of Health); OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction) and Jefferson County Public Health – by M. Johnson, Public Health Nurse 8/09

Deciding when to keep a sick child at home from school is not always easy. It's important for children to attend school and for some parents staying home means missing work. But when a child is truly sick, they need to stay home in the care of an adult to get well and to prevent spreading illness to others.

Please keep the school office up to date with current phone numbers so you or an alternate contact can be reached if your child becomes ill or injured at school.

The following information may help you decide when to keep your child at home. "Child" refers to all school-aged children including adolescents. This information does not take the place of consulting a medical provider. See below for "When to contact a medical provider".

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMMON COLDS and THE FLU			
COMMON COLD		FLU (INFLUENZA)	
<p>The common cold is a contagious upper respiratory infection caused by cold viruses. It is the most frequent childhood illness. Symptoms can last 7 to 14 days. A child with no fever, mild symptoms and otherwise feeling well may be fine at school.</p> <p><b><u>WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:</u></b> A child with heavy cold symptoms such as deep or uncontrollable coughing or significant lack of energy belongs at home even without a fever. See additional information on fever, sore throat and influenza.</p>		<p>The flu is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses and can cause mild to severe illness. A person with influenza can be contagious up to one week after symptoms appear. Children are one of the biggest sources for spreading the flu. To help decrease the spread of regular seasonal flu and novel H1N1 flu:</p> <p><b><u>WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME FROM SCHOOL:</u></b> <b>A child with flu-like illness (fever and cough) must stay home from school for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicine.</b> A fever is defined as a temperature of 100°F or higher. If symptoms occur while at school, the student must be picked up as soon as possible to go home. Contact a medical provider with severe symptoms, if the ill person is pregnant or has a chronic medical condition that could make them vulnerable to influenza complications.</p>	
Symptoms	Usually come on gradually	Symptoms	Usually come on quickly
Fever	Rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102°F in infants and small children	Fever	Typically as high as 102°F, but can rise to 104°F and usually lasts 3 to 4 days
Cough	Mild, hacking cough	Cough	Often, can be severe
Headache	Rare	Headache	Sudden onset, can be severe
Muscle aches	Mild	Muscle aches	Usual, can be severe
Tiredness/weakness	Mild	Tiredness/weakness	Can last 2 or more weeks
Extreme exhaustion	Never	Extreme exhaustion	Sudden onset, can be severe
Vomiting/diarrhea	Never	Vomiting/diarrhea	Sometimes
Runny Nose	Often	Runny Nose	Sometimes
Sneezing	Often	Sneezing	Sometimes
Sore throat	Often	Sore throat	Sometimes



## TIPS FROM YOUR SCHOOL NURSE FOR PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST THE FLU VIRUS

Don't let the flu stand in the way of your school work, sports, extracurricular activities and social life. Follow these tips to protect yourself:

### 1 COMMON SENSE CAN HELP YOU – AND YOUR FRIENDS – AVOID THE FLU

Group gatherings like football games, school dances, and even classrooms are ideal places for the flu bug to spread. Protect yourself and others by following these simple steps:

- **Practice Healthy Habits** – Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds to help prevent germs from spreading. Also, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, because the virus can spread when your hands touch surfaces that are infested with germs. Finally, if you think you've been exposed to the flu, talk to your parents about seeing a doctor.
- **Mind Your Manners** – Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, and throw away your used tissues.
- **What's Mine is Mine, What's Yours is Yours** – Don't share drinks, water bottles, eating utensils or cell phones with friends.

### 2 IF POSSIBLE, GET A FLU SHOT

Many children are at higher risk for complications from the flu. Talk to your school nurse and parents about whether a flu shot is best for you.

### 3 IS IT COLD OR FLU? – KNOW HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE

- If you have a stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat and a hacking cough, you probably have a **COLD**.
- If you have a high fever, severe headache, muscle and body aches, extreme tiredness and a dry cough, you probably have the **FLU**.

### 4 WHAT TO DO IF THE FLU CATCHES UP WITH YOU

If you do get the flu, you don't have to suffer:

- **Talk to Your Parents About Seeing a Doctor** – If you have flu symptoms, talk to your parents about staying home from school. Your doctor may decide to prescribe an antiviral medication, which can shorten the number of days that you're sick.
- **Talk to Your School Nurse** – If you think you might have the flu while at school, visit your school nurse. Together, you can discuss your symptoms. If the nurse thinks you could possibly have the flu, he/she can notify your parents and request that you see a doctor.