

NOTES FROM THE NURSE



GUIDELINES FOR SICK DAYS:

FEVER: If your child has a temperature of 100 degrees or greater he or she should stay home and remain home until they are fever free for 24 hours. Giving a child Tylenol and sending them to school is not a good idea. The child is ill and will probably spread their illness to classmates.

VOMITING and DIARRHEA: If your child has vomited or had diarrhea the evening before or morning of school, please do not send them to school. These symptoms can cause some dehydration and your child may feel weak. Besides the fact they will probably be spreading the illness to others. Please wait until there has been no diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours before sending your child back to school.

COUGHS and COLDS: Simple colds with a runny nose, mild cough and watery eyes without a fever are welcome at school. If the cough is severe enough to cause vomiting or it causes the child not to be able to participate, they may not function well at school. You can try over-the-counter remedies to ease the cold symptoms.

SKIN RASHES: If the rash has any fluid or pus coming from it, the child must remain out of school until the rash has been treated and a note from the doctor states it is ok to return to school, or until the rash is gone, dried, or scabbed over with no new spots appearing. Anytime a rash is associated with fever, the child may not come to school until that fever is gone for 24 hours without medication. Sometimes a rash is a sign of a contagious disease such as chickenpox. Sometimes, rashes are not contagious, but are uncomfortable and itchy from contact with something the child is allergic to. In that case, although school is certainly a good option, please consider comfort measures such as an antihistamine, following the district policy for medication administration at school and discussing possible treatment with your doctor and/or the school nurse.

RED EYES: ESPECIALLY IF THERE IS ALSO DRAINAGE OR CRUSTING AROUND THE EYE -this can often mean your child has *conjunctivitis*, also known as pink-eye. Not all pink-eye is contagious. Sometimes it is just allergies or other irritations that are causing the red color, but until we know for sure, which means we must have a note from the doctor stating the condition is not contagious, or until the redness and drainage are completely gone, your child must remain out of school.

Thank you for helping us stay healthy!

STREPTOCOCCAL INFECTIONS

A variety of infections, including strep throat, scarlet fever, rheumatic fever, and *Impetigo*, are caused by Group A streptococci bacteria.

Strep throat infections are characterized by a very red, painful throat often accompanied by fever, tender and swollen lymph nodes (called glands by many people), headache, and stomachache. Sometimes a strep throat will be accompanied by coughing, or less often, a runny nose. The vast majority of sore throats in children and adults are caused by viruses, *not* strep bacteria.

Scarlet fever is a type of streptococcal infection characterized by a skin rash. The rash is caused by a toxin produced by this special strain of strep. The rash usually consists of fine, red bumps that feel sandpapery and usually appear on the neck, chest, groin, and/or inner surfaces of the knees, thighs, and elbows. It may last only a few hours. Other symptoms are flushed cheeks, paleness around the mouth, and a red tongue that resembles the surface of a strawberry. It is not any more serious than a regular strep throat infection.

Rheumatic fever (abnormalities of the heart valves and inflammation of the joints) can develop 5 to 6 weeks after the occurrence of any type of strep infection that goes untreated. In rare instances, kidney disease can also follow an untreated strep infection. These are immune complex mediated diseases and not a result of actual infection in the heart or kidneys. Therefore, it is very important that all cases of suspected strep infections be referred to healthcare providers for treatment. People with persistent sore throats without a runny nose should have a throat culture.

Transmission

Strep throats can occur at any age, but are most common among school-aged children, during the colder months, and in crowded situations. If one person in a family gets strep throat, other family members may also get it. The Group A streptococci are transmitted from one person to another through microscopic respiratory secretions. The incubation period lasts 2 to 5 days. People with strep throat are generally not infectious until their symptoms appear. They continue to be infectious until they have received treatment for 24 hours..

Diagnosis

Throat cultures are used to diagnose strep infections. Rapid tests are now available through healthcare providers. Although the accuracy of these tests is generally high, sensitivity may vary. Therefore, negative rapid test results should be followed by a culture, if indicated.