

To speak to a registered nurse, call healthdirect on 1800 022 222.
If your injury or illness is critical or life threatening, call triple zero (000).

School exclusion periods

If your child has an infectious condition, you may need to keep them at home from day care or school to stop it from spreading. Here's a list of common childhood illnesses and their recommended exclusion periods.

If you would like to learn more about any of these conditions, click on their names below. You can also find out what may happen if your child needs to be [excluded from school for health reasons](#) here.

Sometimes people who have been in contact with an infected child may also need to be excluded from school or work, such as friends, siblings or other family members. Your doctor can advise you about this.

Condition	Common symptoms and how it's spread	Is a vaccine available?	Should I keep my child home from school?
Chickenpox	Chickenpox causes mild fever and a rash of red, itchy patches. These turn into fluid-filled blisters before they crust over to form scabs and eventually drop off. Chickenpox spreads through close person-to-person contact and droplets in the air (from sneezing and coughing, for example).	Yes	Yes, until all blisters have dried, which is usually around 5 days after the rash first appeared.
Colds	Common symptoms of a cold include coughing, low-grade fever, a sore throat, sneezing and a blocked or runny nose. Colds are spread through droplets in the air – from coughs or sneezes, for example – and on surfaces.	No	No, there is no need to exclude a child with the common cold if they seem well.
Conjunctivitis	Conjunctivitis, or 'pink eye', causes redness and swelling of the outer layer of the eye and inside the eyelid. It can also cause sore and watery eyes, with pus. Conjunctivitis spreads through contact with the discharge from an infected eye, nose or throat.	No	Yes, until the discharge (pus) from their eyes has stopped – unless otherwise advised by your doctor.

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<u>Diarrhoea</u>	Diarrhoea is loose, watery stools occurring more than 3 times in 1 day. It can be caused by a virus, bacteria, parasite, food poisoning, allergy, or other conditions. Stomach cramps, nausea, a fever, headache and loss of appetite are common associated symptoms.	No	Yes, until they have not had a loose bowel motion for 24 hours.
<u>Gastroenteritis</u>	Gastroenteritis, also known as 'gastro', can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, as well as nausea and stomach pains. It spreads easily from having contact with an infected person (or their vomit or stools). It can also spread via contaminated food or water.	No	Yes, until they have not had a loose bowel motion for 24 hours.
<u>Hand, foot and mouth disease</u>	The main symptoms of hand, foot and mouth disease are fever and tiny blisters on the cheeks and gums, inside the mouth and on the hands and feet. Children pass it on easily by touching other kids, or toys that other children will play with.	No	Yes, until all blisters have dried.
<u>Head lice</u>	Head lice are tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed that live in the hair of humans. They bite and cause itching of the skin. Lice can be passed between people by close head-to-head contact and sharing personal items, such as combs.	No	No, as long as effective treatment begins before the next school day.
<u>Impetigo</u>	Impetigo, also known as 'school sores', causes sores and blisters. The affected area can become irritable and itchy. It can spread to anyone who touches infected skin or items that infected skin has touched.	No	Yes, until they have started antibiotic treatment. Any sores on exposed skin should be covered with a watertight dressing.

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<u>Influenza (flu)</u>	Influenza, or 'the flu', commonly causes symptoms such as high fever, dry cough, muscle ache and fatigue. Less common symptoms include sore throat and a runny nose. Children may also have abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting. It spreads from person to person through droplets in the air.	<u>Yes</u>	Yes, until they are well.
<u>Measles</u>	Early symptoms of measles include fever, cough, feeling tired, sore throat, runny nose, discomfort when looking at light and sore, watery eyes. A rash appears after 3 to 4 days. The spots (or blotches) are red and slightly raised. Measles spreads through droplets in the air.	<u>Yes</u>	Yes, for at least 4 days after their rash first appeared.
<u>Mumps</u>	Mumps is recognisable by the painful swellings on the side of the face under the ears. Other symptoms include headache, joint pain and a high temperature. It's spread by close contact or by coughing and sneezing.	<u>Yes</u>	Yes, for 9 days or until the swelling goes down (whichever is sooner).
<u>Rubella</u>	Symptoms of rubella, or 'German measles', include a distinctive red-pink skin rash, swollen glands (nodes), and cold-like symptoms such as a mild fever, sore head and runny nose. Rubella is spread through personal contact, or by coughing and sneezing.	<u>Yes</u>	Yes, until they have recovered fully, or for at least 4 days after the rash first appeared.
<u>Scabies</u>	Scabies is an infestation of mites (tiny insects) that burrow under the skin causing intense itching and sometimes a rash. Scabies is passed from person to person through close skin contact or the sharing of clothing, towels and bedding. It's not caused by poor personal hygiene.	No	Yes, until the day after they start appropriate treatment.

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<u>Threadworms</u>	Threadworms, or 'pinworms', look like 1cm-long pieces of white thread. The main symptom is itching in the anal area or around the vagina. Kids are often infected by getting threadworm eggs on their hands and then putting their hands in their mouth.	No	No, exclusion is not necessary.
<u>Whooping cough (pertussis)</u>	Whooping cough, or 'pertussis', usually begins with a persistent dry cough that progresses to intense bouts of coughing, including a 'whooping' noise as the child breathes in. It's passed on through close personal contact, sneezing and coughing.	<u>Yes</u>	Yes, until 5 days after they started antibiotics, or for 21 days from the beginning of their cough.

Visit the National Health and Medical Research Council website for a comprehensive list of [recommended minimum exclusion periods](#).

Sources:

[National Health and Medical Research Council \(NHMRC\)](#) (*Staying Healthy – Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services, 5th Edition*)

Last reviewed: July 2018