

# Nurse Notes

From Jenny Baldassaro, RN, BSN

Dear Parents,

We understand that sometimes, deciding whether or not to keep a “sick” child home from school can be difficult. The following may help you in that decision, and hopefully help prevent the spread of illness here at school...

In general, a child should stay home if he or she is **too uncomfortable to participate in all activities and stay in the classroom; if he or she needs more medical attention than the school can give; or if he or she might be spreading harmful diseases to others**, according to Cynthia Devore, chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health.

**FEVER:** Students should stay home with fever (orally over 100.0 F) until the fever subsides and medicines to decrease the temperature are no longer needed. The child should be “fever-free” **for 24 hours without the use of medicines to lower the fever.**

**RASHES:** According to JPPSS policy, any “undiagnosed rash” must be cleared by a physician before the student can return to school. Often the rashes appear **AFTER** the contagious stages of some illnesses, but should still be seen by a physician to rule out any other accompanying issues that can occur with some diseases (example: Fifth’s Disease).

**DIARRHEA and VOMITING:** A child must be free of these symptoms (without the use of medications) for **24 hours** before returning to school.

**“PINK EYE”:** Conjunctivitis is exactly that... pink eye. But “pink eye” can be bacterial, viral or allergen in nature. Only viral and bacterial are contagious, and only bacterial responds to antibiotics. Often, without monitoring the eye for a few days, it’s hard to tell the cause. Bacterial is often purulent or has “gunk” in it, especially in the morning. Keep the child home if the eye is “crusty” or “itchy” and contact your physician for guidance. Again, **good hand-washing is key** in helping prevent the spread of pink eye, in the event that it’s viral or bacterial.

**COMMON COLDS:** If we kept our children home for the length of a cold, they could miss quite a lot! Stuffy noses, low-grade fevers and coughs are fine as long as the symptoms are **mild**, and the student can do her work. Be mindful to treat their mild symptoms like cough or runny nose with over the counter medicines before they leave for school. Sometimes these are enough to ensure your child can participate as normal, despite the mild cold. Children with fever over 100.0 and excessive symptoms causing tiredness and making it hard to participate should stay home.

**INFLUENZA:** Stay home. Signs that your child has the flu and not a common cold include higher fever, aches and pains, fatigue and severe cough. It’s almost certain your child will not feel well enough to learn.

**PREVENTION** is key... and **HAND-WASHING WORKS** to prevent the spread of germs and illness. If we all do our part to help prevent the spread of germs, we can all stay healthy and our children will be better equipped to **LEARN!**