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# AAP News

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## AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

### Determining when to keep your child home from school

Is your child's tummy ache a sign of the flu or just Monday morning moaning? Is a little cough reason enough to miss a big test?

Parents often face the difficult decision of whether to keep a child home from school. Experts advise sending a child to school only if he or she is well enough to learn. This means the child's symptoms do not disrupt his or her ability to concentrate in class and do not distract classmates, according to Cindy Devore, M.D., FAAP, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health Executive Committee.

If a parent suspects the child is faking the illness, Dr. Devore suggests looking at the "total child." Does the child usually complain of illness right after a break or weekend? Does the child demonstrate behaviors like social isolation and mood swings that could suggest a bigger reason for avoiding school? Contacting your child's pediatrician can help determine whether the symptoms are physically or emotionally based.

Symptoms that may warrant a day at home or visit to the doctor include:

- persistent fever (temperature higher than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit when taken by mouth);



- severe sore throat that lasts more than 48 hours, especially when accompanied by a fever;
- a significant rash, particularly when other symptoms are present;
- large amounts of discolored nasal discharge;
- severe ear pain;
- an uncontrolled cough;
- diarrhea; and
- severe headache, especially with a fever.

Parents can allow children to return to school after symptoms are gone for at least 24 hours.

— Heather Waldron

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