

Should my child go to school or nursery today?

It can be tricky knowing whether to keep your child off school or nursery when they're unwell.

By law if your child is aged 5 to 16 years old they must be in full time education (at school or at home). It's important to phone school or nursery the first morning and let them know if you are keeping your child at home and the reason they won't be in.

Missing a lot of school because of ill health can have a big impact not only on your child's education, but also on how they feel about school. It may affect their confidence, make them feel socially isolated and they may feel nervous about going back to school.

If your child is well enough to go to school but has an infection that could be passed on, such as worms or head lice, let their teacher know.

The advice below is based on government guidelines. Some schools and nurseries may have their own rules. If these rules are causing problems and are different to those below then it may be worth directing your child's school or nursery to the official guidelines by the [UK Health Security Agency](#).

Your child can go to school or nursery with the following illnesses:

Conjunctivitis

- Children can go to school
- They should be encouraged to wash their hands to prevent further spread of infection
- For more information go to [Conjunctivitis](#).



Hand, foot and mouth, warts and verrucae, athletes foot and molluscum contagiosum

- Children can go to school
 - Verrucae should be covered in swimming pools and changing rooms
- For more information go to [NHS hand, foot and mouth](#), [Warts and Verrucae](#), [NHS Athletes Foot](#), [NHS Molluscum Contagiosum](#)



Headache, earache and stomach ache

- Children with headache, earache or stomach ache can go to school - just let the staff know they have felt unwell
 - Give paracetamol and plenty of fluids to drink
 - If headache, earache or stomach ache persist... seek advice
- For more information go to [Earache](#) and/or [Tummy Ache](#)



Head lice

- Children can go to school with head lice but they **must** be treated for the condition to prevent further spreading
- Parents should treat their children and other family members by [wet combing with a nit comb](#) and conditioner



Threadworm

- Children can go to school when they have started their [treatment](#)
- Everyone at home should be treated



Your child may be able to go to school or nursery with the following illnesses (if they are well enough):

Coughs and colds

- Children can go to school
- Children can be given paracetamol and ibuprofen, encouraged to drink plenty of fluids
- If your child is asthmatic, remember they may need their blue inhaler more often
- Due to Covid-19, a consistent cough should be considered a major symptom, and you should follow the [Covid-19 guidance](#)

For more information go to [Coughs and Colds](#)



Shingles

Exclude only if the rash is weeping and cannot be covered



Sore throat, tonsillitis

- Children can go to school
- Children can be given paracetamol if unwell or in pain and plenty of fluids to drink

For more information go to [Sore Throat](#).



Your child will need to stay off school or nursery with the following illnesses:

Diarrhoea and vomiting

Children can return to school 2 days after the last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting

For more information go to [Diarrhoea and Vomiting](#)



Fever/high temperature

- You can give paracetamol/ibuprofen and encourage them to drink plenty of fluid
- Keep your child off school until their fever goes away
- If the child's high temperature continues for five days or more, seek advice

For more information go to [High Temperature/Fever](#).

Due to Covid-19, a high temperature should be considered a major symptom and you should follow the [Covid-19 guidance](#)



Flu

- Children should go back to school when recovered - this is usually about five days
- **Not sure?** seek advice

Find out more about the [Flu Vaccine for Children \(NHS page link\)](#).

For more information go to [high temperature/fever](#)



Impetigo



- Children can go back to school when their lesions are crusted or healed, or two days after starting antibiotics
- Children should be encouraged to wash their hands

For more information go to [Impetigo](#)



Measles, Chicken Pox and Rubella (German Measles)



Measles

- Children should go back to school **four days** after the rash has started

For more information go to [Measles NHS page link](#)



Chicken Pox

- Cases of chicken pox are generally infectious from 2 days before the rash appears to 5 days after the onset of the rash
- Although the usual exclusion period is 5 days, all lesions should be crusted over before children return to nursery or school

For more information go to [Chickenpox](#)



Rubella (German Measles)

- Children should go back to school **four days** after the rash has started. Please let the school know, as pregnant members of staff may be affected

For more information go to [Rubella \(German Measles NHS page\)](#) or our [rashes page](#).

Note: Measles, Mumps and Rubella (German Measles) MMR is a notifiable disease.



Mumps



Children should go back to school five days from the start of swollen glands

For more information go to [NHS Mumps page](#)



Scabies



- Children can go back to school after the [NHS rsth treatment](#)
- Others at home should be treated



Scarlet fever or strep throat



Children should go back to school 1 day after starting appropriate antibiotic treatment

For more information go to [scarlet fever](#) or [Strep](#)



Whooping cough



Children should go back to school five days after starting antibiotics. Non-infectious coughing may continue for many weeks

For more information go to [Whooping Cough](#)





If possible try to time your child's medication so that it does not need to be taken during school hours or at nursery. You should ask school or nursery about their own policies or rules around medication.

Children can go to school or nursery when they are taking medication if:

- The child's parent or carer has given written permission
- The medicine is in its original container (except insulin which may be in a pen or pump)
- It is clearly labelled with the dose and frequency
- It is in date. Make sure you know when your child's medication is going out of date and, if needed, replace it.
- Any left over medication is collected when no longer needed

Where possible children should:

- Know where their medication is and who to ask when needed
- Be allowed to carry their own medication or have easy access to it. This is important for medications that may be needed in an emergency, for example asthma inhalers
- Take their medication themselves if able with appropriate supervision

Over the counter (OTC) medicines

OTC medicines (for example paracetamol, hay fever medication) have clear labelling which allows them to be given safely in nursery or school. It must be in the original container (including any patient information leaflet if provided). Please do not make a GP appointment to try and get these medications on prescription, you will be advised to get this from the pharmacy directly. If your child's school or nursery says that they are unable to give over the counter medication without a prescription, this is incorrect. They may ask for written or verbal permission stating the medication and dose to be given.

Further information:

[Guidance on conditions for which over the counter items should not routinely be prescribed in primary care](#)

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)



Other information



Health Visitors



Health visitors are nurses or midwives who are passionate about promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing illness through the delivery of the [Healthy Child Programme](#). They work with you through your pregnancy up until your child is ready to start school.

Health Visitors can also make referrals for you to other health professionals for example hearing or vision concerns or to the Community Paediatricians or to the [child and adolescent mental health services](#).

Contact them by phoning your [Health Visitor Team](#) or local Children's Centre.

Click below to find information on your local health visiting team:

[North Cumbria](#)

[Northumberland](#)

[North Tyneside](#)

[Newcastle](#)

[Gateshead](#)

[South Tyneside](#)

[Sunderland](#)

[County Durham](#)

[Darlington](#)

[Hartlepool](#)

[Stockton](#)

[Middlesbrough](#)

[Redcar and Cleveland](#)

Sound advice

Health visitors also provide advice, support and guidance in caring for your child, including:

- Breastfeeding, weaning and healthy eating
- Exercise, hygiene and safety
- Your child's growth and development
- Emotional health and wellbeing, including postnatal depression
- Safety in the home
- Stopping smoking
- Contraception and sexual health
- Sleep and behaviour management (including temper tantrums!)
- Toilet training
- Minor illnesses

For more information watch the video: [What does a health visitor do?](#)



School Nurses



School nurses care for children and young people, aged 5-19, and their families, to ensure their health needs are supported within their school and community. They work closely with education staff and other agencies to support parents, carers and the children and young people, with physical and/or emotional health needs.

[Contacting the School Nurse](#)

Primary and secondary schools have an allocated school nurse – telephone your child's school to ask for the contact details of your named school nurse.

There is also a specialist nurse who works with families who choose to educate their children at home.

What the school nursing service deliver may vary depending on your local area offer. Click the link below to find information on your local school nursing team:

Sound Advice

Before your child starts school your health visitor will meet with the school nursing team to transfer their care to the school nursing service. The school nursing team consists of a school nursing lead, specialist public health practitioners and school health staff nurses.

They all have a role in preventing disease and promoting health and wellbeing, by:-

[North Cumbria](#)
[Northumberland](#)
[North Tyneside](#)
[Newcastle](#)
[Gateshead](#)
[South Tyneside](#)
[Sunderland](#)
[County Durham](#)
[Darlington](#)
[Hartlepool](#)
[Stockton](#)
[Middlesbrough](#)
[Redcar and Cleveland](#)

- encouraging healthier lifestyles
- offering immunisations
- giving information, advice and support to children, young people and their families
- supporting children with complex health needs

Each member of the team has links with many other professionals who also work with children including community paediatricians, child and adolescent mental health teams, health visitors and speech and language therapists. The school health nursing service also forms part of the multi-agency services for children, young people and families where there are child protection or safeguarding issues.



NHS 111



If you're not sure which NHS service you need, call [111](#). An adviser will ask you questions to assess your symptoms and then give you the advice you need, or direct you straightaway to the best service for you in your area.

Sound advice

Use [NHS 111](#) if you are unsure what to do next, have any questions about a condition or treatment or require information about local health services.

For information on common childhood illnesses go to [What is wrong with my child?](#)

999

Accident and Emergency



A&E departments provide vital care for life-threatening emergencies, such as loss of consciousness, suspected heart attacks, breathing difficulties, or severe bleeding that cannot be stopped. If you're not sure it's an emergency, call [111](#) for advice.

Sound advice

- Many visits to [A&E](#) and calls to [999](#) could be resolved by any other NHS services.
- If your child's condition is not critical, choose another service to get them the best possible treatment.
- Help your child to understand – watch this video with them about going to [A&E](#) or riding in an [ambulance](#)

Information Sources

[College co-signs letter from Chief Medical Officer on school attendance and health \(rcgp.org.uk\)](#) this is a letter from the Royal College of GPs co-signed by Chris Whitty providing guidance to support GPs in having conversations about children attending school

[NHS Page, is my child too ill for school](#)

[Do I need to keep my child off school? \(English and translations\) | HSC Public Health Agency \(hscni.net\)](#)

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