The beginning of the school year is often accompanied with coughs, snifflies and sneezes.

When children are feeling under the weather, parents are left with the choice on if their child can tough it out at school or needs to stay home.

According to Randi VanOcker, a family physician at Greenville Family Medicine, children can still attend school if the illness is mild and won’t interfere with his or her ability to learn. If the illness does interfere with the child’s ability to learn or could be distracting to classmates, he or she should stay home.

A few of the signs a child should stay home instead of going to school include a persistent or severe fever of more than 100.4 degrees, diarrhea, vomiting, severe sore throat, severe ear pain or a headache accompanying a fever.

Greenville Public Schools officials suggest parents keep their sick children home if they have a fever, vomiting, diarrhea, uncontrolled cough and runny nose or a rash without a diagnosis by a health care provider.

“Parents should also limit the impact of sending a child to school with a possible contagious disease such as pink eye, hand-foot-mouth disease or influenza,” VanOcker said. “Remember influenza is not a stomach illness. The flu is a respiratory illness with fever and chills, body aches, congestion and decreased appetite.”

Greenville Public Schools directs parents to the Mid-Michigan District Health Department’s brochure on keeping sick children home from school. The brochure can be found at mmdhd.org by clicking “communicable diseases” under the community health tab.

“Staying home and resting at the first sign of illness will help shorten the length of illness,” the Mid-Michigan District Health Department advises.

VanOcker said keeping children home when sick also prevents contagious diseases from spreading to classmates.

If parents decide to keep their child home, they should make sure the child is staying hydrated and rested, and a parent can treat symptoms with over the counter medications or supportive care.

However, if a child has a fever over 103 degrees, a severe sore throat, decreased urination, decreased appetite or rashes with open wounds, boils or animal bites, a parent should take the child to see a doctor.

“Parents know their children,” VanOcker said. “If you have any concerns that the illness may be severe or the child is not acting like him/herself, bring him/her in to see the doctor.”

For working parents, Greenville Family Medicine has extended their office hours to see current and new patients from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The Greenville Convenient Care Walk-in Clinic is another option with hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

“Greenville Family Medicine is also working on improving access to immunizations and opportunities for well-child exams given parents and children’s hectic schedules,” VanOcker said. “We are holding immunization and well-child clinics quarterly. These are scheduled on Saturdays and late nights to accommodate our patients’ busy lives.”

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