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Guidelines for keeping sick kids home

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- With the school year well underway, Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) wants to remind parents to keep their children home from school or childcare when they are sick.

This is particularly important this year because COVID-19 rates in our area continue to be high, especially in school-aged children. We are also seeing higher than expected respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity. RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious, especially for infants and older adults. October also marks the beginning of the influenza season, though the peak of the season is usually between December and February.

“One of the most effective ways to keep illness out of school is for those who are ill to stay home,” states Dr. Jennifer Morse, Medical Director for MMDHD. “In general, children should not go to school or childcare if they have a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, belly pain, or unusual rashes or sores. During the COVID-19 pandemic, RSV season, and influenza season, other concerning symptoms include new or worsening cough, wheezing, difficulty breathing, sore throat, body aches, extreme fatigue, and new stuffy or runny nose.”

If your child is experiencing any of the symptoms listed above, he or she should be evaluated by a healthcare provider and not return to school until told it is safe to do so. If your child requires testing for COVID-19 or another illness he or she should not return to school while waiting for the test results. Also be sure to tell your child’s school or childcare provider if your child is diagnosed with an illness, as it is important for the safety and wellbeing of other students and staff members.

If your child has been exposed to a contagious illness, like COVID-19 or whooping cough, he or she may need to quarantine. Quarantine has been used for centuries to prevent the spread of infection by those who may be infected and contagious but not yet showing symptoms. There are now modified quarantine options approved by the health department that provide more opportunity for students to stay in school. The modified quarantine options can be found [here](#)

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MMDHD highly recommends that students wear masks while at school. Many schools have made mask use “optional” in their buildings and at school activities; however, mask use is still recommended for your child’s and family’s safety.

Parents can help reduce the spread of germs by teaching their children how to properly wash their hands and to wash their hands frequently, especially before eating, and after using the bathroom and blowing their nose. Parents can also help keep germs at bay by teaching their children how to properly cover coughs and sneezes.

If your child is eligible, consider getting them vaccinated for COVID-19 and for influenza now and every fall. Eating a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, and staying active are also very important ways to protect against illness.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

We take action to protect, maintain and improve the health of our community.

Advancing innovative solutions to achieve healthier outcomes

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