WHEN TO KEEP A CHILD HOME WITH ILLNESS ESPECIALLY DURING COLD AND FLU SEASON

Sometimes it can be difficult for a parent to decide whether to send children to school when they wake up with symptoms of an illness or complaints that they do not feel well. In general, during cold and flu season, unless your child is significantly ill, the best place for them is in school where they have all already been exposed to the same germs and where they are less likely to expose other more vulnerable people, like the very young or very old. Remind your children to **discard used tissues promptly, not to share personal items**, to **cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze**, to keep their **hands away from their face**, and to **wash hands thoroughly** and **often with soap and warm water**. However, there are some situations in which it is best to plan on keeping your child home for a day to rest or to arrange for an appointment with your health care provider.

The following are a few situations that warrant watching and possibly calling your health care provider:

- Persistent **fever** greater than 100.4° orally, including a fever that requires control with medication such as Tylenol
- Child is **too sleepy or ill** from an illness, like vomiting and/or diarrhea
- **Cough** that makes a child feel uncomfortable or disrupts the class
- **Sore throat** that is **severe** along **with fever** and feeling **ill for more than 48 hours.**
- **Strep Throat** (must have been taking an antibiotic for at least 24 hours before returning to school)
- **Honey-crusted sores** around the nose or mouth or **rash** on other body parts; OR a rash in various stages including **boils, sores and bumps** that may be chicken pox; OR a significant rash accompanied by other symptoms of illness such as fever
- **Red, runny eyes** that distract the child from learning
- Large amount of **discolored nasal discharge**, especially if accompanied by **facial pain or headache**
- Severe **ear pain or drainage** from the ear
- **Severe headache**, especially if accompanied by fever
- Any condition that you think may be **serious or contagious** to others.

Whenever there is an outbreak of a specific contagious infection, the school sends out a notice to alert you to watch out for any symptoms, under the guidance of the Nassau County Department of Health.
If your child starts to develop symptoms, it is important that you alert your own health care provider that your child had a possible exposure. Be sure to ask your provider when it is safe for your child to return to school, both for your child's health and for the health of the rest of the school.

Finally, if you know your child is still running a fever, it is not a good idea simply to give them Tylenol and send them onto school because as soon as the medicine wears off, you are apt to get a call from the school nurse to leave work and come to pick up your feverish child. It is better to let them stay home in bed with a fever and take their medications at home until they are off all medicines and ready to learn for a full day in a classroom.

Also, If you find a pattern of your child asking to stay home from school, especially if they are falling behind or appear anxious by the thought of attending school, or if there does not appear to be any obvious physical symptoms, it may be a good idea to contact your school nurse and your health care provider to discuss your concerns.

Remember, whenever you keep your child home from school, please call the school nurse or attendance office in advance of the start of the school day and leave a message that your child will be absent.