

# Sick kid?

*For many reasons, a child being home from school while sick can be stressful. Parents worry about the severity of their child's illness and about the child missing school, all while trying to shuffle work schedules to be home.*



But when should kids stay home from school? Dr. Hannah Chow-Johnson, pediatrician at Loyola University Health System, gives some guidelines to help parents make that decision.

**PINKEYE.** Extremely contagious and is usually caused by a virus. One of the first signs of pinkeye is discomfort. Other symptoms include a sticky discharge that can cause the eyelids to stick together, and the area around the eye can look red and swollen. Stay home until the redness is gone.

#### **STOMACH PROBLEMS.**

Gastroenteritis or the stomach flu can cause vomiting and diarrhea. Most often, it is caused by a virus. A child needs to rest and take gradual fluids to recover. Stay home until the vomiting and diarrhea are gone for 24 hours.

**FEVERS.** Most schools have a policy that a child can't attend if they have a fever higher than 100 degrees F and the child needs to be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Stay home and rest.

**COUGHING.** If a child has a steady cough, a hacking cough, or coughing fits, he or she should stay home. It's also important for children and adults to be vaccinated against pertussis (whooping cough). Go back to school with a minor cough, but practice good coughing skills such as coughing into a tissue or elbow and washing hands often.

**SORE THROAT.** Many parents think sore throat means strep throat, but in 70% of the cases the pain is caused by a virus. Symptoms of strep also include headache, stomachache, and fever. Sometimes there is a sunburn-like rash on the throat. Stay home if the doctor has given an antibiotic and the child has been on it for 24 hours. If the sore throat is viral, return to school when the child feels better.

**LICE.** Unfortunately those stubborn bugs mean no school for kids. They can quickly spread through a classroom. Children need lice treatment and combing to remove all nits.