



## Bemidji School District Health Services

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### SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

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## When Students are “Too Ill” to be in School

Often an early morning decision that parents have to make is whether their child is well enough to go to school. Not only may the child feel too sick to learn very much on those days, but they are also infecting other students and staff. Below are some guidelines, which will help you decide whether to send them or keep them home.

**Fever:** If a student has a temperature of 100 degrees or more, parents should keep their children home. If they have 100 degrees or more fever at school, parents will be called to come to pick up their child. They need to be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Tylenol, Ibuprofen, and other similar medications will bring a fever down, but it does not mean that the child is still not sick. They need to be fever free without taking medication for 24 hours.

Often temperature rises during the day. A slight fever in the morning will get much higher by noon. Often with a borderline temperature (99-100), kids might feel quite ill. Use your judgment about sending them when their fever is less than 100.

**Vomiting and diarrhea:** Keep them home! Vomiting and diarrhea are not considered “normal”. Often children will feel better after vomiting, but will quickly become ill again. Keep them home until they are free of symptoms for at least 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhea.

**Antibiotic treatment:** If your child is on antibiotics for a communicable disease, such as strep throat, pink eye, etc, keep them home until they have been on the antibiotics for 24 hours. The exception would be for pertussis (whooping cough). They need to stay home for 5 full days of antibiotic treatment before returning to school. If they are going to continue on antibiotic treatment at school, be sure to follow the school’s medication policy. Please follow your doctor’s orders for antibiotics. Stopping them when the child feels better may cause the child to become sick again. Giving them for the entire time the doctor prescribes will help insure that the infection has been treated.

**Chicken pox:** Students with chicken pox need to stay home until all of the pox marks have scabbed over-generally 7 days. If the student gets chicken pox from the vaccine, it is usually a mild case. But they still need to stay home until the pox marks are all scabbed over.

**Pink eye:** Students could have either viral or bacterial pink eye. Bacterial pink eye needs to be treated with antibiotics-usually eye drops-for 24 hours before returning to school. No exclusion is necessary for viral pink eye, but only a doctor can diagnosis whether it is viral or bacterial.

**Head lice:** Children with head lice need to be treated and have the nits carefully removed from their heads. When students return to school after being treated, parents are to bring them to the health office to have their heads checked before going to class. They will be examined again at intervals to make sure no head lice were missed.

Head lice are very treatable. Everyone in the family and close contacts should be checked for head lice and treated if found. Many different treatment methods are available. Pamphlets on treatment are available in the school health offices or contact the district school nurse.

Bemidji School district allows only 2 days absence for treatment of head lice. Many parents are able to treat the children and return them the next day so they do not miss school. You will be required to pick your child up from school if they have head lice. Anyone can get head lice, although head lice do not jump from one person to another. Encourage your children not to share combs, brushes, hats, headbands, or other hair clips.

**Keeping healthy:** During the season of flu and colds, it is important to try to remain as healthy as possible. Adequate sleep and nutrition will help. Keeping sick children home when they are ill, will prevent others from becoming ill. Vital is encouraging good, frequent hand washing.

Minnesota Department of Health encourages the “Cover Your Cough” campaign. Sneezing and/or coughing into a tissue or the inside area of the elbow rather than the hands will prevent the spread of infection along with good hand washing. For further information, please check out their website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/infectioncontrol/cover/> Another good website regarding this year’s flu would be <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm>

If you are unsure whether or not to send your child, you can contact your school’s health office or the district school nurse.