



Acute Respiratory Infections

16 July 2021

Dear Parent,

Nationally and in the South West, we are seeing an increase in the number of children who are unwell with fever, coughs, colds and sore throats not caused by COVID-19. There has also been an increase in the number of outbreaks of respiratory infections in nurseries. Some of these have been shown to be due to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Parainfluenza.

Most commonly these are mild self-limiting illnesses and can be treated at home with paracetamol (calpol) and keeping up fluid intake by drinking. However, they can cause more serious illness in those with underlying health problems or in the very young or very old.

They are easily transmitted from person to person so it is important that children and staff are kept away from school/nursery whilst they are acutely unwell and for at least 24 hours after any fever has gone.

The symptoms that should trigger exclusion from school or nursery are:

- 1) A temperature, cough or loss of or change to taste or smell – exclude on suspicion of Covid-19 and the parent should arrange a PCR test via [NHS online portal](#) or by calling 119. **The child should not leave isolation until the outcome of the test is known. Their household should also isolate at least until the test results are received.**

If the test is positive, the child will need to stay at home for ten days and until they are fever free for at least 24 hours. Household and other close contacts will also need to stay at home for ten days.

If the test is negative, the child should only return to nursery/school once they have recovered from their acute symptoms and are at least 24 hours fever free.

2) A temperature of $\geq 37.8^{\circ}$ plus new onset, or worsening of one or more respiratory symptoms: (cough, hoarseness, nasal discharge/congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, wheezing, sneezing). The child should only return to nursery/school once they have had a negative test for COVID-19 and they have recovered from their acute symptoms and are at least 24 hours fever free.

Examples of acute symptoms with which children should not attend school/nursery include fever, muscle aches, hacking cough.

Examples of symptoms with which children could attend school/ nursery include persistent runny nose, irritable cough (if COVID-19 positive, they must have completed the appropriate isolation period).

If you are concerned about how unwell a child or adult is, please seek advice from your pharmacy, your GP or NHS 111 in the first instance; call 999 or go to A&E *in an emergency*.

What else can I do to stop the spread of infections?

Practice good hand and respiratory hygiene

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards

Further Information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

[Respiratory tract infections \(RTIs\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/respiratory-tract-infections/)

Yours faithfully,

Dr Fiona Neely
Consultant in Health Protection
SW Health Protection Team
Public Health England