When your dad is a pediatrician, a Father’s Day tale



Medical school graduation 1994: Dr. Julie Kardos with her pediatrician dad, Dr. Stephen Kardos

When your dad is a pediatrician

When your dad is a pediatrician, you never get to stay home from school for illness, feigned or real. Unless you are vomiting.

When your dad is a pediatrician, people call your home phone and ask you about symptoms of chickenpox, even when you are only ten years old.

When your dad is a pediatrician, you sit in booster seats long after your friends “outgrow” theirs.

When your dad is a pediatrician, you know to give that kid who feels like he is going to pass out in marching band at the 95 degree football game Gatorade or juice, not just plain water, because of “electrolytes.”

When your dad is a pediatrician, you do not have a curfew as a teen, because he is more concerned about you or your friend speeding to get home in time than about what time you get home.

When your dad is a pediatrician and you call home from college with an illness, he makes you go to Student Health because he knows it is very difficult to diagnose an illness on the phone. And he will NOT “just call in an antibiotic.”

When your dad is a pediatrician, you have extra security when leaving him to watch your own children, because not only will he show his grandchildren a grand time, but also he will know what to do if they get sick.

Thank you, Dad.
Happy Father’s Day!

Julie Kardos, MD
©2019 Two Peds in a Pod®

Kids with “pink eye” CAN attend daycare, and other

updated school exclusion recommendations

It’s 6 a.m., you are running late for work and your kid is “kinda” sick. Can you send him to daycare?



Dr. Kardos and Dr. Lai and a little friend talk about “Too Sick for School? The Latest Guidelines for Staying Home” at DVAEYC’s annual conference for early childhood educators

Yesterday we reviewed with an audience of early childhood education teachers the latest medical guidelines* for excluding children from early childhood education centers. Here are some of the updates we shared with the teachers attending the annual DVAEYC conference held at University of Pennsylvania:

When should a child go home from daycare? Remember the overriding goals for exclusion:

To expedite the child’s recovery

To prevent undue burden on teachers

To protect other children and teachers from disease

Following are the guidelines that most surprised our audience, as well as other highlights from our talk.

Pink eye (conjunctivitis)– most kids can remain in school

- "Pink eye" is like a "cold in the eye" and can be caused by virus, bacteria, or allergies.
- Just as kids with runny noses can still attend school, so too can kids with runny eyes.
- A child with pink eye does not need to be on antibiotic eye drops in order to attend school. The presence or absence of treatment does not factor into letting a child attend school.
- Any child with pink eye who suffers eye pain, inability to open an eye, or has so much discharge that she is uncomfortable, needs to go home.
- If there is an outbreak (two or more kids in a room), the center's health care consultant or the department of health can give ideas on how to help prevent further spread
- Good hand washing technique prevents the spread of the contagious forms of pink eye (viral or bacterial).

Fever – by itself, is not an automatic exclusion



- For practical purposes, a fever (no matter how it is

taken) in a child who is over 8 weeks old is a temperature of 101 degrees F. Therefore, 99 degrees F is NOT a fever, even if that number is higher than the child's baseline temperature.

- If a child with a fever acts well and does not require extra attention from teachers, then that child is medically safe to stay in school. Sending him home is unlikely to protect others. Kids are contagious the day before a fever starts, so febrile kids most likely already exposed their class to the fever-proking illness the day before the fever came.
- If the fever causes the child to become dehydrated or makes the child too sleepy or miserable to participate in class, then that child should go home.
- Any baby two months of age or younger with a fever of 100.4 or higher needs immediate medical attention, even if he is not acting sick.
- If a child has not received the recommended immunizations for his age, then he needs to be excluded for fever until it is known that he does NOT have a vaccine preventable illness.
- If a child goes home with a fever, he does not need medical clearance to return to school.
- Read more details about fever and "fever phobia" here.

Head lice, while icky and make our heads itch just to think about them, carry no actual disease.

- The child with live lice should go home *at regular dismissal time*, receive treatment that night, and be allowed back in school the next day.
- By the time you see lice on a child's head, they have been there for likely at least a month. So sending him home early from school only punishes the child, causes the parent to miss work needlessly, and does nothing to prevent spread.
- Lice survive off of heads for 1-2 days at most (they

need blood meals, and die without them), so a weekend without people in school kills any lice left behind in the classroom by Monday morning.

- Lice do not jump or fly and thus need close head-to-head contact to spread, hence the reasons behind why your child's center spaces matts at nap time a certain amount distance apart, and do not allow kids to share personal objects such as combs.



The mouth ulcers and foot rash of Hand Foot Mouth

Hand-foot-mouth disease- not an automatic exclusion

- This common virus, spread by saliva, causes a blister-like rash that can appear on hands, feet, in the mouth and in the diaper area, sometimes in all of these locations. Hand washing limits spread, and kids can attend school with this rash.
- The child who refuses to drink because of painful mouth lesions should go home so the parent can help improve hydration. In addition the child who refuses to participate in activities should stay home. You can read more about this virus here.

Poison ivy rash is not contagious to other people. The rash of poison ivy is an allergic reaction/irritation from wherever the oil of a poison plant touched the skin. The ONLY way to "catch" poison ivy is from the poison ivy plant itself. But if the itch from poison ivy makes a child too miserable to

participate in class activities, she may need to go home. Read more about poison ivy here.

Vomiting more than twice, associated with other symptoms (such as fever, hives, dehydration or pain), or with vomit which is green-yellow or bloody are all reasons a child should leave school. Recent history of head injury warrants exclusion and immediate attention since vomiting can be a sign of bleeding in the head. See our post about vomiting.

Diarrhea, meaning an increase in stool frequency, or very loose consistency of stools, is a reason to go home if the diarrhea

- cannot be contained in a diaper,
- causes potty accidents in the toilet trained child
- contains blood, is bloody or black
- results in more than two stools above baseline for that child—too many diaper changes compromises the teacher's ability to attend to other children.
- is with other symptoms such as fever, acting very ill or jaundiced (yellow skin/eyes)
- Read more about poop issues here.

Molluscum contagiosum is a benign "only skin deep" illness similar to warts—direct vigorous contact or sharing of towels or bath water can spread the virus among kids but the rash itself is harmless and not a reason to stay home from school. Read our prior post for More on this little rash with the big name.

MRSA is a skin infection that looks red and pus filled and is typically painful for the child. Treatment involves draining the infection and/or taking oral antibiotics. If the infected area is small and can be covered completely, a child may stay in school.

Measles This illness causes high fever, cough, runny nose, runny eyes, and cough and a total body rash. Your local

Department of Public Health will provide recommendations about how long to exclude a child with measles as well other precautions a school should take. So they are safe, unvaccinated children will have to be excluded for period of time as well.

Also note, at times, the department of public health will exclude even children who are acting well from school for outbreak management of a variety of infectious diseases.

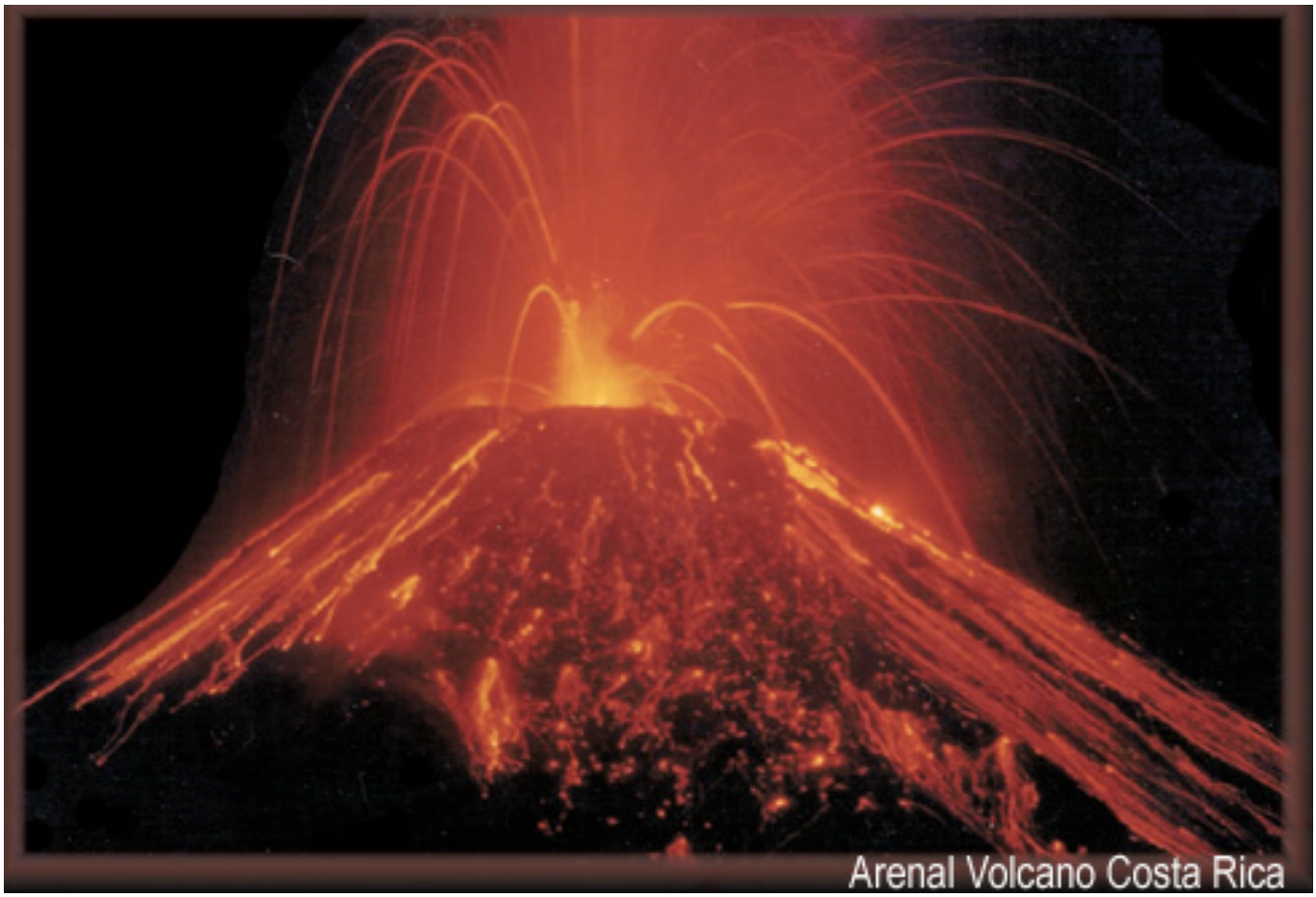
Surprised? As you can see, there are few medical reasons to keep your child home from daycare for an extended period of time. As Dr. Lai often says to the big kids, "If there is nothing wrong with your brain, you can go to school and learn." Bottom line- no matter the reason, if you realize at six in the morning that your child will not be able to learn and function at baseline, keep him home and seek the advice of your child's pediatrician.

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD

©2017 Two Peds in a Pod®

*A straight-forward, comprehensive guide to the guidelines can be found in *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 4th edition,* Editors: Susan S. Aronson, MD, FAAP and Timothy R. Shope, MD, MPH, FAAP, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

How to treat your vomiting child



“Mommy, I throwed up.”

Few words are more dreadful for parents to hear, especially at 2:00am (my children’s usual time to start with a stomach bug). In my house, I am the parent who, after the vomiting, comforts, changes pajamas and sheets, washes hands and face, and sprays the disinfectant. My husband scrubs (and scrubs, and scrubs) the rug. Little kids never throw up neatly into a toilet or into the garbage can. Sometimes even big kids can’t seem to manage to throw up conveniently.

What should you do when you have a vomiting child?

After you finish cleaning your child and her immediate environment, I suggest that you CHANGE YOUR OWN CLOTHES AND WASH YOUR HANDS! The most common cause of vomiting in kids is a stomach virus, and there are so many strains, we do not develop immunity to all of them. And trust me,

stomach viruses are extremely contagious and often spread through entire households in a matter of hours. Rotavirus, a particularly nasty strain of stomach virus, is preventable by vaccine, but only young babies can get the vaccine. The rest of us are left to fend for ourselves.

Stomach viruses usually cause several episodes of vomiting and conclude within 6-8 hours. Concurrently or very soon thereafter, the virus makes an exit out the other end in the form of diarrhea, which can last a week or so.

A hint to get through a long night: If your kid is too young to vomit into the nearest trash can, make a nice nest for her with many towels on the bathroom floor. For the older kids, put layers of towels on the pillow.

The biggest problem children face when vomiting is dehydration.

Kids need to replace fluids lost from vomiting. Pedialyte® or other oral rehydration solutions (ORS) such as Kaolectrolyte® or CeraLyte® are useful and well tolerated beverages for rehydrating kids. They contain salt, sugar, electrolytes and water, all substances that kids need when they throw up and have diarrhea.

For babies however, try to “feed through” with breast milk or formula unless otherwise directed by your child’s doctor.

Most oral rehydration guidelines are based on diarrheal illnesses such as cholera, so you will find slight variations on how to rehydrate. Basically, they all say to offer small frequent amounts of liquid. I council parents to wait until no throwing up occurs for 45 minutes to an hour and then start offering very small amounts of an ORS (we’re talking spoonfuls rather than ounces) until it seems that the vomiting has subsided.

In her house, Dr. Lai uses the two vomit rule: her kids go back to bed after the first vomit and she hopes it

doesn’t occur again. If vomiting occurs a second time, she starts to rehydrate.

Continue to offer more fluids until your child urinates- this is a sign that her body is not dangerously dehydrated. Refusing to drink? Children of all ages do better with straws, and you’d be surprised how much you can get in with a medicine syringe (available at pharmacies).

Can’t immediately get out to the store?

The World Health Organization has recommended home based oral rehydration solutions for years in third world countries. Also, while the oral rehydration solutions are ideal, any fluid is better than none for the first hours of a stomach bug. You can give older kids watered down clear juices, broth or flat ginger-ale with lots of ice. Now, some kids hate the taste of Pedialyte®. Plain, unflavored Pedialyte® splashed with juice often goes down better than the flavored varieties. For some reason, plain water tends to increase nausea in sick kids and copious amounts of plain water can lower the salt in a child’s bloodstream. So, offer a fluid other than plain water while your child is vomiting.

Even if your child drinks the Pedialyte®, once the stomach symptoms have subsided, don’t forget that Pedialyte®, while excellent at “filling the tank,” has no nutrition. The gut needs nutrition to overcome illness. Start to offer small amounts of food at this point. Easy-to-digest foods include complex carbohydrates such as rice, noodles, toast with jelly, dry cereal, crackers, and pretzels. Additionally, give protein such as bits of turkey or baked chicken or tofu.

Thicker fluids such as milk and orange juice do not sit as well in upset bellies, nor do large quantities of anything, food or drink. So offer small bits of nutrition

fairly frequently and let kids eat as their appetite dictates. Warning- just when everything blows over, toddlers in particular may go a day without vomiting, then vomit one more time as a last hurrah.

Vomiting from stomach viruses typically does not cause severe pain.

A child curled up whimpering (or yelling) on the floor with belly pain might have something more serious such as appendicitis, kidney stones, or a urinary tract infection. Call your child's doctor about your child's vomiting if you see any of the following:

- Blood in vomit or in stools
- Severe pain accompanying vomiting (belly pain, headache pain, back pain, etc.)
- No urine in more than 6 hours from the time the vomiting started (dehydration)
- Change in mental state of your child- not responding to you appropriately or inconsolable
- Vomit is yellow/green
- More fluid is going out than going in
- Illness not showing signs of letting up
- Lips and mouth are dry or eyes sunken in
- Your own gut tells you that something more is wrong with your child

Of course, when in doubt, call your child's doctor .

Hope this post wasn't too much to stomach!

Julie Kardos, MD and Naline Lai, MD
©2013, 2015 Two Peds in a Pod®