



Regarding Health/Sickness Issues in Public Settings:

When deciding whether or not to keep your child at home, please keep in mind the following points suggested by pediatrician and Music Together dad Ben Kruskal MD of Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates, based on the medical literature. (This information is made available courtesy of Music Together of Newton and Tri-Valley MT of California.)

Runny noses: It is not correct to assume a clear runny nose is OK and green is not. The color of the runny nose does not help to determine how contagious a child is. It is more reliable to make a judgment call by the way the child is acting. If your child has slept poorly and is acting tired and grouchy along with the runny nose, assume he is sick enough to stay home. If the runny nose is a week old and your child is acting playful and active, she is likely healthy enough to attend. If your child's nose is runny enough that the mucus is being wiped on sleeves and/or classroom equipment it is best to keep him at home! Some children can have persistent runny noses of any color for weeks or months, which is often caused by allergies, and should not be contagious. Please check with the child's mother or your teacher if you are concerned about a child with a consistently runny nose in your class.

Coughs: A child with a frequent deep moist cough of less than 3 weeks' duration should stay home, especially if he is too young to cover his own mouth when he coughs. An occasional cough in an otherwise healthy-appearing energetic child is of no more concern than the cold that causes it. A persistent cough for more than 3 weeks in the absence of other symptoms is unlikely to be due to a contagious infection.

Antibiotics: While ear infections are not contagious, the colds that often lead to them are. Even if your child has been put on antibiotics for some other infection occurring together with a cold, this does not make the cold any less contagious. Please use the same criteria listed here based on your child's symptoms if your child has a cold and is on antibiotics. If your child has been put on antibiotics for a strep throat, she may return to class after taking antibiotics for 24 hours.

Fevers: Please keep your child at home until it has been at least 24 hours since her last fever without the assistance of fever reducer medicines. Your child is the most contagious during the time she is feverish.

Diarrhea or vomiting: While these symptoms are most commonly caused by viruses rather than bacteria, they can have serious consequences, especially for infants and toddlers. Your child should not return to class until he has been free of both diarrhea and vomiting for at least 24 hours. If your child has a more significant infection such as chickenpox, measles, German measles (rubella) or whooping cough (pertussis), please check with your pediatrician about when she will no longer be contagious. The germs which cause most common infections can be transmitted by close airborne contact (face to face within roughly 3 feet) OR passed through hand to hand contact, as well as carried on clothes, toys, etc. Please wash your hands and those of your child before and after class or avail yourself of a waterless hand disinfectant such as Purell. If you are not sure if your child is contagious or not, please err on the side of caution and stay at home. People are often contagious for 24-48 hours before showing any symptoms. Therefore a child who appeared perfectly healthy in class could come down with a fever two hours later and may have unwittingly exposed the class. Obviously, this is unavoidable.

In summary: There is going to be exposure to germs no matter how careful anyone is or what the policies are. Any communal activity (for example storytime at the library, playgroup, new moms' group, church, etc.) lays us open to catching germs, which is not always bad. There is reasonable evidence suggesting that humans need to be exposed to germs at an early age to develop their immune systems. By following these guidelines, you can minimize the risk of infection being transmitted at our classes while also minimizing the need for unnecessary absences. * * *

Pakachoag Music School keeps hand sanitizer on hand in classrooms and the lobby for public use. If you notice we have run out, please let someone at the front desk know so we can re-stock. Thank you.