# Managing illness in schools and early childhood education and care services – information for parents and carers

*One of the most important things we can do to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in our community is to stay at home when we are unwell, even when we have the mildest of symptoms.*

# What you need to know

### If your child is unwell, even with the mildest of symptoms, they must stay home.

* If a child becomes unwell during the day, they should be collected from early childhood education and care (ECEC) or school as soon as possible.

### If your child has any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) below, however mild, they should get tested for COVID-19:

* fever
* chills or sweats
* cough
* sore throat
* shortness of breath
* runny nose
* loss of sense of smell or taste

Some people may also have headache, muscle soreness, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. For more health advice:

* call the 24-hour COVID-19 Hotline 1800 675 398
* call your child’s general practitioner (GP)
* call Nurse on Call 1300 606 024

### Your child can be tested with a rapid antigen test at home, or a PCR test. They must stay at home until they receive a negative result and their symptoms have resolved.

* If you can’t get a rapid antigen test or if you’re still worried about your child, you can [find and go to a testing site](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/where-get-tested-covid-19) for a PCR test. Some [testing sites have rapid antigen tests](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests-pcr-centres) as well.
* If a rapid antigen test is negative but your child is symptomatic, your child should have a PCR test done.
* Find advice about [getting tested](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/getting-tested), as well as [parent and carer information about rapid antigen testing](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/node/19670).

### If your child has a negative COVID-19 test and their symptoms have resolved, they can return to ECEC or school.

* You don’t need written medical clearance from COVID-19.
* There are illnesses other than COVID-19 where your child must stay at home for a certain amount of time – these are listed on the Department of Health ECEC and [school exclusion table](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/school-exclusion-table).

### A medical certificate is not needed, but may be helpful if your child:

* **has ongoing symptoms due to underlying conditions such as hay fever or asthma** 
  + If their symptoms are usual for their condition, they can keep going to ECEC or school.
  + A medical certificate describing their condition can help ECEC and schools better know your child’s health and care plans.
* **is younger (pre-school up to Grade 2) and has ongoing symptoms after a viral illness**
  + Children can still have a cough or runny nose after recovering from some common [viral illnesses](https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Viral_illnesses/) – if they are otherwise well, they can go to ECEC or school.
  + Your ECEC or school might ask for a medical certificate from their GP to make sure your child is otherwise well.
* **Remember: if your child’s symptoms are different or worse than usual, they should stay at home, get tested for COVID-19 again, and seek health advice.**

### If your child has a positive COVID-19 test, they must stay at home:

* Follow the [checklist for people with COVID-19](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-cases).
* If a [rapid antigen test](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/rapid-antigen-tests) at home is positive, report the result as soon as you can so your family can start getting advice and help:
  + Tell the [Department of Health](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/report) by online form or COVID-19 Hotline 1800 675 398.
  + Tell your ECEC or school (including other children at home who are [household contacts](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts)).
* Answer [texts and surveys from the Department of Health](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/covid-positive-pathways).
* You may be able to get [financial help](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/support) or [other help](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/getting-help) to look after your family safely at home.
* **When your child finishes their quarantine period,** you don’t need written medical clearance from COVID-19 to return to ECEC or school.

### Further information

* All families can plan and prepare ahead for COVID-19 at home using [this checklist](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-prepare-covid-isolation).
* You can find information about COVID-19 in [different languages](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/translated-information-about-coronavirus-covid-19).

This advice has been prepared by the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Health.