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Dear Doctor,

Sick Leave for Children with Communicable Diseases

To prevent the spread of communicable diseases in schools/institutions, children with communicable diseases should not attend school/institution during the infectious period. For this purpose, the Department of Health has issued recommendations to child care centres, kindergartens and schools on the leave period for sick children with infectious diseases. A copy of the recommendations is attached for your easy reference. We would appreciate if you would take it into consideration when prescribing sick leave to children with communicable diseases. Should you have any queries, please feel free to contact the respective Regional Office of the Department of Health as follows :

Regional Office

Hong Kong Regional Office
Kowloon Regional Office
New Territories East Regional Office
New Territories West Regional Office

Telephone Number

2961 8791
2199 9149
2158 5107
2615 8571

Yours faithfully,

(Dr. L. Y. TSE)
for Director of Health

We are committed to providing quality client-oriented service

Recommended Sick Leave Period for Children with Communicable Diseases

Communicable Disease	Incubation Period (days)	Recommended Sick Leave Period#
Bacillary dysentery*	1 – 7	Until diarrhoea has ceased and stool has been shown to be free of the bacteria (3 consecutive stool specimens are to be collected at least 24 hours apart).
Chickenpox*	14 – 21	About 1 week or until all vesicles have dried up
Cholera*	1 – 5	Until certified free from infection (3 consecutive stool specimens are to be collected on alternate days starting 48 hours after completion of antibiotic treatment).
Conjunctivitis	1 – 12	Until eye discharge has ceased
Diphtheria*	2 – 7	Until certified free from infection (2 negative cultures from both throat and nose swabs taken not less than 24 hours apart and not less than 24 hours after completion of antibiotic treatment).
Hand, foot and mouth disease	3 – 7	Until all vesicles have dried up or as advised by doctors
Measles*	7 – 18	4 days from the appearance of rash
Meningococcal infections*	2 – 10	Until adequate eradication therapy for carriage state has been completed
Mumps*	12 – 25	9 days from onset of swelling
Poliomyelitis*	7 – 14	At least 14 days after onset of symptoms
Rubella* (German measles)	14 – 23	7 days from the appearance of rash
Scarlet fever*	1 – 3	5 days after starting antibiotics or as advised by doctors
Tuberculosis*	Variable	As advised by doctors
Typhoid fever*	7 – 21	Until at least 3 consecutive stool specimens collected at least 24 hours apart are negative for the bacteria. (Start stool collection 48 hours after completion of antibiotic treatment.)
Viral gastroenteritis	1 – 10	Until 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea
Viral hepatitis A*	15 – 50	Until at least 1 week after onset of jaundice or as advised by doctors
Whooping cough*	7 – 10	Until at least 5 days of the 14-day course of antibiotic treatment has been received.

These are general recommendations based on consideration of the infectious period only. Other factors such as the clinical condition of the child should be considered. The attending doctor should exercise professional judgement in deciding the sick leave period.

* Notification of these communicable diseases to the Department of Health is required by law.