

Eastern Shore Rural Health System, Inc. Information for Parents: Child Sent Home from School with Concern for Respiratory Illness

What is an upper respiratory infection (URI)?

URIs are infections of the upper airways that can be caused by a variety of viral and bacterial pathogens. Viruses rarely have a medication that will cure the illness or kill the virus to stop symptoms. Antibiotics **may** help with *bacterial* infections. URI symptoms are similar to cold symptoms like runny nose, cough, congestion, fever, sore throat, and sneezing. Sometimes, diarrhea and vomiting may go along with an URI.

What should a parent do when there is concern for a URI or other respiratory infection in their child?

Parents should call their child's primary care provider or pediatrician with any concerns. When your child has new URI symptoms, there could be a variety of causes, including concern for COVID-19 or influenza (flu). Your child's doctor can help with diagnosis and a plan for managing time out from school and symptoms. You should not send your child to school with upper respiratory symptoms, vomiting, diarrhea or fever.

What should I do at home to help my child?

Make sure to offer your child oral hydration or "fluids" frequently. This may include having your child drink water, Gatorade or Pedialyte to help keep your child appropriately and safely hydrated. Monitor your child's hydration by making sure they are urinating (peeing) with normal frequency. It is common for children to have decreased appetite when they are ill, but they must maintain intake of fluids. For most children older than 6 months of age, Motrin (ibuprofen) or Tylenol (acetaminophen) can be used to help with pain and fever when they have an URI.

What else can I do to help prevent respiratory infections in my child?

Be sure your child is up to date with all vaccinations, including the annual seasonal flu vaccine. This can reduce the risk of developing the flu and reduce spread within the community. Whenever possible, school age children should wear masks when in public, and should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently to avoid spread. Social distancing (avoiding crowds, and maintaining a 6-foot distance from non-family members when possible) is also crucial. These measures reduce risk for COVID-19 and a variety of other respiratory infections too.

How do I reach my child's ESRHS medical provider?

Call your usual center during office hours if you have questions about your child's illness and/or to schedule a visit if you would like a return to school clearance. The call center will contact your provider team, who will get more information and arrange for a visit if needed. Parents of children under age 13 with an established patient portal account can also contact ESRHS using the portal. Go to esrh.org and click on the purple patient portal button.



Some visits may be done by telehealth via phone or video. Work notes for parents will also be discussed, if the child has to isolate or quarantine for an extended period of time. COVID-19 testing and other testing may also be considered.

How can I contact my child's provider after the center is closed?

Call the center number you normally use. Listen for prompt to push #1 to reach the on-call provider. The on-call answering service will pick up and ask you personal information and why you are calling. They will then place you on hold to contact the on-call provider. They should also indicate if you will be directly put through to the provider or if that provider will call you back.

When should I seek emergency care?

Most URI symptoms can be managed at home until you can check in with your primary care provider. Some reasons a parent may consider seeking emergency care include:

- Respiratory distress, severe breathing concerns or retractions (sucking in around the chest bones).
- Dehydration or inability to take in fluids to maintain hydration.
- Altered mental status like a child acting very atypical or not alert, or inability to normally wake a child up.

Most doctors would not recommend going to the emergency room for **mild** URI symptoms like sneezing, mild sore throat, mild cough (which are not associated with trouble breathing or respiratory distress). The emergency room is not expected to provide excuse notes for work and school, these should be provided by the PCP.

If you have additional questions, please call your child's medical center between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., or use the patient portal for children under age 13.

Eastern Shore Rural Health System, Inc. Center Hours and Phone Numbers

Atlantic Community Health Center

Open Monday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. | Tuesday – Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
757-824-5676

Chincoteague Island Community Health Center

Open Monday-Friday 8 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.
757-336-3682

Eastville Community Health Center

Open Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. | Tuesday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
757-331-1086

Onley Community Health Center

Open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday 7:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. / Thursday 7:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. / Saturday 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.
757-787-7374