



Guidelines: Returning Your Children to School After Extended Illness, Orthopedic Injury, Surgery, and/or Stitches

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), two criteria warrant a note from your Health Care Provider (HCP) when your children return to school following extended illness, orthopedic injury, surgery, and/or stitches: (1) when there is a question about the child's diagnosis being a health risk for others in school, and (2) when there is a question about a care plan for a child who may require special accommodations such as an excuse from Physical Education / recess (AAP, 2017).

- **Extended Illness**
 - The school nurse will ask for a note from your HCP especially when there is a question about: (1) the implication of a diagnosis for the others in school (for example, is the child contagious?) and/or (2) a care plan for a child who may require special accommodations.
- **Orthopedic Injuries and Orthopedic Devices** (including, but not limited to, casts, braces, splints, crutches)
 - A note from your HCP is required.
 - The HCP's note will advise the school nurse as to the progression of activity allowed after an orthopedic injury.
 - Carefully monitoring physical activity lessens the chance of re-injury and assures that your children will be able to perform at their best when they return to full activity (AAOS, 2020).
 - The cast/splint must be protected from damage so it can hold injured bones in place during healing (AAOS, 2020). For this reason, students who are wearing casts or splints will be excused from Physical Education.
- **Surgery and/or Stitches**
 - A note from your HCP is warranted.
 - Students with stitches will be excused from Physical Education / recess until the stitches are removed.
 - Limiting movement of the area around the incision improves healing. Carefully monitoring physical activity after surgery reduces the chance of pulling apart stitches (AAFP, 2020)

REFERENCES

- Aronson, S.S. & Shope, T.R. (Eds.). (2017). *Managing infectious diseases in child care and schools: A quick reference guide, 4th Edition*. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Care of casts and splints. (2020). Retrieved January 21, 2021, from American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) Web site <https://orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/recovery/care-of-casts-and-splints/>
- Caring for your incision after surgery. (2020) Retrieved January 21, 2021, from American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) Web site <https://familydoctor.org/caring-for-your-incision-after-surgery/>
- Your recovery plan. (2012). Retrieved July 19, 2019, from American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) Web site <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=A00365>