

HAND, FOOT, & MOUTH DISEASE

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is Hand, Foot, & Mouth Disease?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is an illness caused by a virus known as an enterovirus. It occurs frequently in children under ten years of age, but adults can become infected also. Outbreaks are common in schools, day care centers and preschools. Most cases are seen in the summer and early fall.

How is it spread?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is spread by direct contact with nose and throat secretions, saliva, fluid from blisters, and contact with the stool of an infected person. The incubation period is 3-6 days. The disease is communicable during the acute stage of the illness, and perhaps longer since the virus can persist in the stool for several weeks. A person is most contagious during the first week of the illness.

How is it treated?

No specific treatment is available for enterovirus infections. Doctors may recommend medication to provide relief from fever, aches or pain from mouth ulcers.

How can we prevent Hand, Foot, & Mouth Disease?

- Wash hands well with soap and water after toileting or changing diapers.
- Wash or dispose of articles soiled with nose or throat discharges or feces. Disinfect surfaces contaminated with respiratory discharge or stool.
- Exclude infected children from school or day care until fever is gone and no new sores are developing.

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- Begins with mild fever, malaise, poor appetite, and frequently a sore throat.
- Small, blister-like sores develop on the inside of mouth, lasting up to 10 days.
- Similar sores resembling a rash (with flat or raised red spots, some with blisters) develop on the palms, fingers and soles of the feet.
- A fever is sometimes present.
- The person may only have mouth ulcers or rash.

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