

# Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

## What is Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is an infection caused by the coxsackie virus. The infection can occur at any age, but it is most likely to affect young children. It usually occurs in the summer and fall. This infection is not related to the virus that causes diseases in animals. There is no treatment for hand, foot and mouth disease.

## What are the signs and symptoms of Hand, Food and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is usually not a severe illness. It may cause a fever, headache, sore throat, loss of appetite, lack of energy, small painful blisters in the mouth and a skin rash. The skin rash consists of red spots, often topped by small blisters. It usually appears on the hands and feet but can affect other parts of the body as well. The rash may persist for up to 10 days.

## How does Hand, Food and Mouth Disease spread?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is most contagious during the first week of illness. It spreads through contact with an infected person's saliva or stool. Germs can get on a person's hands or other objects and then spread into someone's mouth causing infection. The virus can be found in a person's stool for up to 4 weeks after the start of the illness.

## What can parents do?

- Keep your child comfortable and offer plenty of food and liquids. If your child has sores in their mouth offer cold, bland liquids such as milk or water. Do not give fruit juice because it will sting.
- Acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help reduce the discomfort caused by mouth sores. Sometimes the pain can be so severe that your health care provider will have to provide a prescription pain reliever.
- Make sure everyone in your house washes their hands with soap and water after changing a diaper, blowing their nose (or a child's nose), using the toilet and before preparing and eating food.
- Do not pop the blisters; they will heal on their own.
- Wash toys and surfaces in your home regularly.

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318  
or toll free 1-888-294-6630, ext. 8318.

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