

HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a viral infection that causes a blister-like rash involving the hands, feet, and mouth. The infection occurs most commonly in children less than 10 years of age and most often in the summer and fall months. Outbreaks may occur in childcare settings and preschools.

SYMPTOMS: Low-grade fever may last 1 to 2 days, runny nose and/or sore throat. Blister-like rash occurs in the mouth, on the sides of the tongue, inside the cheeks, and on the gums. These sores may last 7 to 10 days. Blister-like rash may occur on the palms and fingers of the hands and on the soles of the feet. The infection usually goes away without any serious problems. Rarely, may be a cause of viral meningitis (brain infection).

SPREAD: The viruses leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. It also is spread through droplets that are expelled from the nose and mouth of an infected person during sneezing and coughing.

INCUBATION: It usually takes 3 to 7 days after exposure for symptoms to begin.

CONTAGIOUS: During the first week of illness and possibly for several weeks after illness. Virus
PERIOD: may be shed for several weeks in stool. Infected persons who may not seem sick are able to spread the virus.

EXCLUSION: Until fever is gone and child is well enough to participate in routine activities (sores or rash may still be present).

TREATMENT: No specific treatment. Call your healthcare provider.

PREVENTION/CONTROL:

1. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water using the bathroom, after changing diapers, after handling anything soiled with stool, and after contact with secretions from the nose or mouth. **Thorough hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.** Parents/guardians and childcare staff should closely monitor hand washing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.
2. Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use, bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled.
3. Cover nose and mouth with tissue when coughing and sneezing, or cough/sneeze into sleeve.
4. Dispose of used tissues.



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For further information, contact Public Health Department on 244-2648 or 244-2734.

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