



Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease

What is hand-foot-mouth disease (HFMD)?

Hand-foot-mouth disease is a common viral illness seen in infants and children. It is most often caused by the coxsackievirus, which is part of a larger group of viruses, called enteroviruses. HFMD causes fever, blisters in the mouth, and body rash. This is not the same disease (hoof-and-mouth) seen in animals.

How is HFMD spread?

HFMD is contagious and is spread through direct contact with an infected person's nose and mouth secretions (saliva, sputum, nasal mucous), fluid from blisters, and stool. It can also be spread through contact with contaminated objects and surfaces. Generally, an infected person is most contagious during the first week of illness.

What are the symptoms of HFMD?

HFMD usually starts with a fever, poor appetite, general malaise (not feeling well), and sore throat. One or 2 days after the fever starts, painful sores will usually develop in the mouth. What begins as small blisters, turn into ulcers. Then, a red rash usually develops on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The rash can be either flat or raised, and is non-itchy. It can also appear on the knee, buttocks, and genital area. An infected person may not experience all symptoms.

How is HFMD prevented?

A person can lower their risk of being infected with HFMD by frequent hand washing with soap and water, especially after changing diapers or going to the bathroom, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and toys, and avoiding close contact (kissing, hugging, sharing utensils) with an infected person.

School Exclusion Policy:

Children do not need to be excluded from school, unless they have a fever of 100 degrees or more. Children must be fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medication, before returning to school.

Resources:

Center for Disease Control & Prevention- <http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/about/index.html>