



## HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (Vesicular Stomatitis)

### What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is caused by a virus. It is most often caught by children under ten years old. Most infections happen in the summer and early fall. Hand, foot and mouth disease is caused by certain types of coxsackie virus or enteroviruses.

### What are the symptoms?

The symptoms start four to six days after contact with an infected person. The first sign of infection may be a fever, sometimes with a runny nose or sore throat. The fever may go as high as 40° C but is generally lower than that. The fever can last up to seven days. About two days after the fever starts, small sores may develop on the inside of the mouth. A day or two later, small red spots may appear on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. These red spots may turn into blisters. The fever, spots and blisters all usually go away after about seven days. Not everyone who gets this disease gets all of these symptoms. Sometimes a person can have the infection and have no symptoms.

### How is it spread?

The virus is spread like the common cold, for up to a week, by contact with discharges from the nose and throat (coughing or direct contact). Hand, foot and mouth disease can also be spread by oral-fecal (mouth to feces) contact, for up to three weeks, because the virus stays for some time in the bowels of an infected person. This disease spreads very easily in childcare settings, and other places where children are close together. So, take extra care to wash your hands and thoroughly clean surfaces after changing diapers and before serving or eating food in childcare settings. Encourage children to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze, to prevent spread of airborne droplets. They should also wash their hands often to avoid spreading the virus to others. After using tissues, throw them directly into the garbage and, again, wash your hands.

### How is it treated?

When necessary, the fever from hand, foot and mouth disease can sometimes be reduced with acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol). Ask your family doctor how much to use, or read the instructions on the bottle carefully. Antibiotics will **not** help treat or cure this disease. Do **not** give ASA (aspirin, acetylsalicylic acid) to children because of the danger of Reye Syndrome. Do not pop the blisters - they will heal better if left alone. Because the mouth sores can be painful, your child may not want to eat or drink. These sores can be treated with an ointment used for teething (e.g. Ambusol), rubbed on with your finger. Give your child only cold, bland liquids like milk or water, and bland, cool, soft foods like bread, noodles, or perhaps a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Don't give fizzy or tart drinks like pop and fruit juice as they will sting.

For additional information, contact your local Public Health office or your family doctor.

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