



## **HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE - FACT SHEET**

### **WHAT IS IT?**

- Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease is a common and moderately-contagious illness of infants and children under age 10 years. It is very rare in adults.
- It is a viral infection with rash and fever. It is not a dangerous disease.
- It is more common during summer than winter months.
- It is unrelated to Foot-and-Mouth (aka Hoof and Mouth) disease which affects cattle and other livestock.
- It is diagnosed when a doctor looks at a child and decides the rash looks like Hand Foot and Mouth Disease. Doctors do not generally use laboratory tests to determine if their diagnosis is correct.

### **CAUSE**

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by a class of viruses called “enteroviruses”, and the most common enterovirus that causes these symptoms is coxsackievirus A16.

### **CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **Early Symptoms**

- Mild fever
- Poor appetite
- Malaise ("feeling sick")
- Sore throat

#### **Later Symptoms (within first 2 days)**

- Tender sores may develop in mouth
- Mouth sores begin as small red spots that blister and then often become ulcers
- Usual locations for mouth sores are on the tongue, gums, and inside of the cheeks
- Skin rash may also develop
- Flat or raised red spots, some with blisters and not itchy; usually located on palms of the hands and soles of feet, but may appear on the buttocks
- Often, only rash or only mouth ulcers
- Most children recover within 7 – 10 days

### **MODE OF TRANSMISSION & CONTROL**

- It is moderately contagious.
- It is spread by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, fluid from blisters, or the stool of infected persons.
- It is most contagious during the first week of the illness
- Incubation Period: After contact, it will take 3-7 days for those who are prone to the disease to show symptoms.
- It is not transmitted to or from pets, or other animals.
- Most people who get this infection will not have any symptoms at all; Younger children have more symptoms.
- You cannot get this disease twice from the exact same virus. But, another enterovirus can cause similar symptoms.

### **HOME & SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

- There is no treatment for this disease. The disease takes its course and then goes away by itself.
- Medications may be taken to alleviate fever and discomfort (e.g., Tylenol/Acetaminophen).
- Cold foods (popsicles) may make mouth sores feel better.
- Use good hand washing techniques.
- Remind students to avoid close contact (e.g. kissing, sharing utensils).
- Clean surfaces contaminated with drool or stool.
- Keep children home if they:
  - Have fever or feel too ill to attend school
  - Have blisters that are in the mouth that are accompanied by drooling
  - The sores on the student's hands are wet or “weeping”
  - They have diarrhea or are unable to control their bowel movements.