



Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities



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Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is most common in children under 5, but anyone can get it. This illness is caused by a virus. The illness occurs most frequently in the summer and early autumn and can be in epidemic proportion in summer camps and child day care facilities.

How is this disease spread?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is spread by **direct contact** with nose and throat discharges (coughing, sneezing), from fluid in blisters and with the bowel movements of the infected person.

What are the symptoms?

- Fever and flu-like symptoms (sore throat, eating or drinking less, feeling unwell)
- 1 or 2 days after the fever starts, painful mouth sores develop, often in the back of the mouth
- A skin rash may appear on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It may also show up on the knees, elbows, buttocks, or genital area

How long does it last?

The incubation period is 3-5 days, and the illness usually lasts for 7-10 days. The person with Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is **very contagious** during the acute stage of the illness (the first week they develop symptoms) and they can sometimes spread the virus to others for days or weeks after their symptoms go away.

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment other than treating the symptoms. The ill person should rest, take food and fluids as they are able (avoid citrus juices). Normal activities can be resumed when the person feels better.

How can I protect my children and myself from this disease?

Direct contact with infected persons should be avoided. Don't share eating or drinking utensils. If you must care for a person with hand, foot, and mouth disease, be sure to wash your hands after giving care or touching soiled clothing or bedding. Soiled articles should be washed with soap or discarded.

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