

HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH DISEASE

Hand, foot and mouth disease is usually characterized by tiny blisters on the inside of the mouth and the palms of the hands, fingers, and soles of the feet. It is commonly caused by coxsackievirus A16 (an enterovirus), and less often by other types of viruses.

Contagiousness:

The virus that causes hand, foot, and mouth disease is transmitted by direct contact with nose and mouth discharges (such as saliva on hands and toys) and feces of infected people. Adults and children are susceptible; however, incidence is highest in young children. The incubation period is 3 to 6 days. The virus is contagious before symptoms begin and continues to be transmissible as long as the virus is shed in the stool.

Signs and Symptoms:

Symptoms are much like a common cold with a rash. They may include fever, sore throat, stomach pain and diarrhea. The rash appears on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and in the mouth (lasting 7 to 10 days).

Treatment:

There is not specific treatment for the virus that causes hand, foot and mouth disease. Care is supportive.

Prevention:

Washing hands well, especially after going to the bathroom, changing diapers and/or handling diapers or other stool-soiled material. Covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Washing toys and other surfaces that have saliva on them.

School Exclusion Guidelines:

School exclusion is not indicated if the child is well enough to attend school.