



Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

What is hand, foot and mouth disease?

- Several different viruses cause HFMD. These belong to the enterovirus group. The most common is *Coxsackievirus A16*.
- It occurs more often in summer and early autumn.
- It is a common illness of infants and children under 10 years old.
- HFMD is a different disease than foot and mouth disease of cattle, sheep and swine.

How does a person get hand, foot and mouth disease?

- Infection is spread from person to person by direct or indirect contact with nose and throat secretions, fluid from blisters, or the stool of infected persons.
- A person is most infectious during the first week of illness.
- It is not spread to or from pets or other animals.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Symptoms usually occur 3 to 5 days after a person has become infected.
- Fever is often the first symptom followed by poor appetite, sore throat and feeling unwell.
- Within 1 or 2 days of the fever, small red spots that blister and often become ulcers, develop on the tongue, gums and inside of the cheeks.

- A skin rash with flat or raised red spots, (some with blisters) develops over 1 to 2 days.
- The rash is usually on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet and sometimes on the buttocks, and/or genitalia.
- A person with HFMD may have only the rash or the mouth ulcers.
- Symptoms usually last 7 to 10 days.

How is hand, foot and mouth disease treated?

- There is no specific treatment.
- If sores in the mouth are painful, drink plenty of fluids and eat soft foods.
- If illness is more severe, check with your doctor.
- The virus can persist in stool for 4 weeks onset of illness.

How is hand, foot and mouth disease prevented?

- Always wash hands thoroughly:
 - after using the toilet
 - after diapering a child
 - after coughing or sneezing.
- Clean solid surfaces and items with soap and water, then disinfect.
- Wash soiled clothing.
- Discard used facial tissues.
- Exclusion is not usually necessary, unless person is feeling unwell or fevered

For more information contact your doctor, Provincial Health Line at **811** or Population and Public Health at **306-655-4612**
