

HAND FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

FACT SHEET



WHAT IS HAND-FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE (HFMD)?

HFMD is a common viral illness that usually affects infants and children under the age of five. However, it can occur in adults. HFMD is caused by numerous viruses belonging to the coxsackievirus and enterovirus group. The rash is typically seen on the hands and feet. Oral lesions can occur without the body rash, and vice versa.

WHAT ARE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HFMD?

After a person has been exposed to the virus, it takes about 3-5 days to develop symptoms. Tiny blisters develop in the mouth and on the fingers, palms of hands, buttocks, and soles of feet. The blisters will last a little longer than one week. There may be common cold symptoms such as fever, sore throat, runny nose, and cough. The blisters in the mouth may make it difficult to eat or drink.

HOW LONG ARE PEOPLE CONTAGIOUS?

An individual may continue to shed the virus through cough, runny nose for 1-3 weeks after an illness. The virus may be shed for weeks to months in the stool after the infection starts.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

Transmission is typically person-to-person, contact with contaminated objects and surfaces, contact with contaminated feces (poop), and through the air (if infected person coughs or sneezes).

HOW DO YOU CONTROL IT?

Everyone should cover their mouths when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of tissues that contain nasal secretions after each use. Use good hand hygiene after using facial tissues and diaper changing. There is no available vaccine or specific treatment for the virus. Measures can be taken to reduce the severity of symptoms. It is important to avoid dehydration. It is not necessary to exclude someone from a group setting unless the ill person cannot care for themselves and this may compromise the health of others. (example: excessive drooling)

