



Hand-Foot-and-Mouth Disease (Enterovirus)

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is a common viral infection that causes outbreaks during the summer and fall. Despite its scary name, this illness generally is mild.

Signs and Symptoms

- Tiny blisters in the mouth and on the fingers, palms of hands, buttocks, and soles of the feet that last a little longer than a week (one, few, or all of these may be present).
- May see common cold signs or symptoms with fever, sore throat, runny nose, and cough. The most troublesome finding often are the blisters in the mouth, which make it difficult for the child to eat or drink. Other signs or symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea can occur, but are less frequently troublesome.

Incubation and contagious periods

- Incubation period: 3 to 6 days.
- Contagious period: Virus may be shed for several weeks after the infection starts; respiratory shedding of the virus is usually limited to a week or less.

Communicability

The fluid in the blisters or ulcers contains virus, which can be passed to another person through nasal and oral secretions, or from an infected person's feces. Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is not transmitted to or from animals or pets; it is not associated with the similarly named disease that can cause serious illness in cattle.

General Measures

Teach the importance of basic hygiene measures such as covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing and frequent, proper hand washing before any activity that brings hands in contact with the mouth.

Control of Cases

In general, most infected children do not need to be excluded unless fever is present, or they are not well enough to participate in usual activities.