

Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease



Mar. 2015

Communicable Disease Division
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Date:

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to **Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease (HFMD)**. HFMD is a common viral infection that most often causes outbreaks in the summer and fall. Although the name of this illness sounds similar to hoof-and-mouth disease of cattle, HFMD is a completely unrelated disease.

What are the symptoms of HFMD?

Despite its scary name, this illness generally is mild. Symptoms include tiny blisters in the mouth and on the fingers, palms of hands, buttocks, and soles of the feet. Common cold signs and symptoms with fever, sore throat, runny nose, and cough may also be present. The most troublesome finding often are the blisters in the mouth, which make it difficult for the child to eat or drink.

How is HFMD spread?

The virus is spread through coughing and sneezing, through the fluid from blisters on the hands and feet, or through contact with the infected person's stool (feces). Children with HFMD generally do not need to be excluded from school or childcare unless the child is particularly uncomfortable and is not able to participate in normal school or childcare activities.

How is HFMD diagnosed and treated?

A health care provider can identify HFMD by the symptoms reported and the appearance and location of the blisters. No specific treatment is available. Symptoms may be treated to provide relief from fever or pain from the mouth blisters.

How do you control the spread?

- Make sure adults and children wash hands frequently and thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- After using the bathroom, wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap.
- After changing a diaper, wash both your hands and the baby's hands with warm water and soap.
- Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing.
- When using a tissue, wash hands well afterwards. Dispose of tissues that contain nasal secretions after each use.

How do I get more information?

For more information about Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease, contact your healthcare provider or Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department at (253) 798-6410 and press "0".