
What is it?

Hand, Foot and Mouth disease is caused by a virus. Blisters, ulcers and sores appear on the:

- ❖ inside of the cheeks
- ❖ the gums
- ❖ the palms and fingers
- ❖ soles of the feet

It is a common condition, occurring mainly in children under 10 years of age (usually the 0-4 age group). Often it is seen in the summer and early autumn every 3-4 years. It is slightly more common in rural areas. It must not be confused with foot and mouth disease of cattle, which is quite different.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are much like the common cold with a rash and appear between 3 and 5 days after exposure. They may last for 7 – 10 days and include:

- ❖ Fever, sore throat and runny nose
- ❖ Blisters (sores) as described, about 4 days after fever

Sometimes other symptoms may be present:

- ❖ Abdominal pain
- ❖ Poor appetite
- ❖ Diarrhoea
- ❖ Cough
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Chest pain

How does it spread?

Hand, Foot and Mouth disease is passed on by droplets from the nose and throat, for example, during sneezing, coughing, kissing. The bowel motions (stools) of infected people are also infectious. (Remember not all people carrying the disease have symptoms)

It is highly unlikely that the disease is spread by insects, in water, in food or in sewage.

Can it be prevented?

Hand, Foot and Mouth disease is easier to pass on at the beginning of the illness. Outbreaks often occur in nurseries, playgroups, schools etc, where the children have close contact with each other.

As the virus causing Hand, Foot and Mouth disease is present in the stools for several weeks, care should be taken with changing nappies, and visiting the toilet.

The risk of spreading the disease will be reduced if you practice the following:

1. Wash carefully all of the hands (especially between fingers and under the nails)

after

- ❖ handling animals
- ❖ changing nappies
- ❖ visiting the toilet

and before

- ❖ cooking
- ❖ handling food
- ❖ feeding the young or elderly
- ❖ eating

2. Good standards of general hygiene

Toys and other surfaces that have saliva on them should be washed with warm water and detergent.

3. Stay off school or nursery

If your child is unwell or has new sores or blisters it is advised that they do not attend school, nursery, playgroup or other childcare facility. Once they are feeling better and the spots are healing they can return.

Will treatment be necessary?

No specific treatment is usually required.

Need further advice or information?

- ❖ NHS Inform www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ NHS24 ☎ 111 www.nhs24.co.uk
- ❖ www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk
- ❖ Local health clinic or GP

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