

# PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET



Department of Health & Human Services

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## Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

### What is Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is an illness involving small blister-like sores which appear in the mouth (usually on the inside of the cheek and tongue, sometimes on the gums, roof of the mouth, and lips). Similar sores resembling a rash may appear on the backs of the hands, palms, top of the feet and soles. A fever is sometimes present. The sores can last up to ten days.

### What causes it?

It is caused by several different types of Coxsackie virus.

### How is it spread?

It is spread by direct contact with nose and throat discharges (spread by droplets) and stool (feces) of infected persons.

### How long is the person contagious?

As long as the sores are present. It may be longer since the virus may be in the stool for several weeks.

### Who gets Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease?

Usually children under age ten, although adults can get it. It occurs mostly in the summer and early fall. Outbreaks in schools, day-care centers, preschools, and nurseries are common.

### Is there any specific treatment for it?

No, there is not treatment for the virus; however, doctors give medicine to help with the symptoms.

### What should be done to prevent or minimize its spread?

- Reduce person-to-person contact where possible.
- Use handwashing and good hygiene.
- Wash or throw away clothing and other items soiled with nose and throat discharges.
- Wash hands and/or launder clothes promptly after handling items soiled with nose/mouth discharge or stool.
- Exclude infected children from day-care or school until fever has disappeared, no new sores are appearing, and child is feeling well enough to participate in regular activities.

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# HAND WASHING INSTRUCTIONS:

- use soap and running water
- rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds
- wash all surfaces, including:
  - backs of hands
  - wrists
  - between fingers
  - under fingernails
- rinse well
- dry hands with a paper towel
- turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands

**For more information on Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease, call (248) 858-1406 or toll free 1 (800) 848-5533.**

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