

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

What is hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)?

HFMD is a common illness among children and infants. Several different viruses cause HFMD, the most common being coxsackievirus A16. Hand, foot, and mouth disease is not the same as the foot and mouth diseases (FMD) that affect cattle, sheep, and swine. Although this virus mainly affects children under 10 years of age, adults may also get HFMD.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of HFMD are characterized by a fever, sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters. Sore throat, malaise, and poor appetite may also occur. Generally, one to two days after the fever begins, red spots may appear on the tongue, gums and cheeks that turn into blisters. The rash develops in another day or two and is found on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and occasionally the buttocks. Some people may have only the mouth sores or rash. From the time of infection to the onset of symptoms is usually 3 - 7 days.

Although rare, a complication of HFMD has been associated with viral (aseptic) meningitis or encephalitis.

How is HFMD transmitted?

HFMD is a moderately contagious virus. Infection is usually spread person to person by direct contact with nose or throat secretions, or the stool of the infected person. A person is typically most contagious the first week of illness.

How is it treated?

There is no specific treatment for the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. Generally treating the symptoms to relieve pain and fevers is sufficient. Most people recover without medical treatment within 7 – 10 days.

Can HFMD be prevented?

The best prevention for HFMD is frequent hand washing. Disinfecting contaminated surfaces and washing soiled clothing can also help prevent disease transmission.

For more information, contact the Broward County Health Department at 954-847-3567, or visit the websites below. This fact sheet is for informational purposes only and is not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider.

www.cdc.gov
www.browardchd.org

Information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention