



HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (Coxsackie Virus A)

What is HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (HFMD)?

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness of infants and children caused by a strain of Coxsackie virus. It causes a blister-like rash involving the hands, feet and mouth.

Is HFMD the same as foot-and-mouth disease?

No. HFMD is a different disease than foot-and-mouth disease of cattle, sheep, pigs, goats and deer.

Is HFMD serious?

The illness is typically mild and complications are rare. Most patients recover without medical treatment in 7-10 days.

How is HFMD spread?

Infection spreads from person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, drainage from blisters or contact with feces of infected persons. Infected persons are most contagious during their first week of illness. HFMD is not transmitted to or from pets or other animals.

What are the symptoms of HFMD and when do they start?

Symptoms of fever, poor appetite, runny nose and sore throat can appear 3-5 days after exposure. A blister-like rash on the hands, feet and mouth usually develops 1-2 days after the initial symptoms.

Who is at risk for HFMD?

HFMD occurs mainly in children under 10 years old, but occasionally occurs in young adults.

How is HFMD diagnosed?

The diagnosis is generally suspected on the appearance of the blister-like rash in a child with a mild febrile illness. Although specific laboratory tests are available to confirm the diagnosis, they are rarely performed due to expense and length of time needed to complete the tests.

How can HFMD be prevented?

Prevent HFMD by frequently washing hands, especially after diaper changes; and by washing soiled clothing. Also, disinfect contaminated surfaces with household cleaners (such as diluted bleach solution made by mixing one capful of household bleach containing chlorine with one gallon of water). Children are often excluded from childcare programs, schools, or other group settings during the first few days of the illness. These measures may reduce the spread of infection, but they will not completely interrupt it, because some persons excreting the virus show no symptoms.

How is HFMD treated?

There is no specific treatment available. Symptomatic treatment provides relief from fever, aches, or pain from the mouth ulcers.