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Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease

Hand foot and **mouth** disease is spread through direct contact with secretions from the nose, mouth and throat of an infected person; by direct contact with any bodily fluid. It's a mild, contagious viral infection common in young children — is characterized by sores in the mouth and a rash on the hands and feet.

Symptoms of Hand, foot, and mouth disease can include the following:

- Fever.
- Malaise.
- Decreased appetite.
- Sore throat.
- Irritability or sleep more than usual.

While there is no medical cure for HFM disease (the illness needs to run its course), the doctor can recommend home care to make your child more comfortable during recovery. Make sure your child drinks plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. Call your doctor if your child remains very irritable, can't be comforted, is sluggish, or seems to be getting worse. Your child also may need to see the doctor if he or she looks **dehydrated**, with signs like a dry tongue, sunken eyes, or decreased urine output. HFM disease usually clears up within several days to a week and kids recover completely.

Preventing the Spread

There is no vaccine to prevent HFM disease or other similar infections. HFM is contagious and can spread through contact with feces, saliva, mucus from the nose, or fluid from the blisters. **Keep kids home from school and childcare while they have a fever or open blisters on the skin and in the mouth.**

Even after kids recover, they can pass the virus in their stool for several weeks, so the infection still can spread to others.

Hand washing is the best protection. Remind everyone in your family to wash their hands often, especially after using the toilet or changing a diaper, and before preparing or eating food. Shared toys in childcare centers should be cleaned often with a disinfectant because many viruses can live on objects for a few days.

As always, any questions, please feel free to contact me at school. If urgent, the school personnel are well informed and /or know how to contact me.

Thanks,

Amber Redeker, RN
School Nurse