**Hand, Foot, Mouth Disease Fact Sheet**

**What is HFMD and what causes it?**

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is an illness that easily spreads from person to person and is caused by viruses belonging to the Enterovirus genus. Coxsackievirus A16 is the most common cause of HFMD in the United States, but other coxsackieviruses and enterovirus 71 have been associated with the illness. HFMD is a very common viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than 5 years old but cases in older children and adults can occur.

**What are the symptoms of HFMD?**

The first symptoms of HFMD are usually fever, sore throat, and not wanting to eat. About 1 to 2 days after fever begins, small red spots form in the mouth on the inside of the cheek, gums, and tongue. The spots may turn into blisters. A skin rash can also form on the hands, feet, and butt, and sometimes on the arms and legs. The rash might have raised or flat red spots and blisters. Not everyone with HFMD get all of these symptoms. HFMD symptoms are usually mild and go away on their own in 7 to 10 days.

**How does HFMD spread?**

HFMD spreads by touching an infected person’s stool, nose and throat fluids (snot and spit), or blister fluid. The virus is often passed when an infected person’s unwashed hands touch someone else or things like toys or tabletops. The viruses that cause HFMD can live a long time on surfaces.

**How is HFMD treated?**

There is no specific medicine to treat HFMD. There are medicines that can help treat pain and fever. People with HFMD should rest and drink enough to avoid dehydration (severe loss of body fluids).

**How can you prevent the spread of HFMD?**

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. A person can lower their chances of getting or spreading HFMD by:

* Keeping children with HFMD home from daycare/school until 24 hours after resolution of fever and mouth sores have healed (scabbed and no longer leaking fluid) and 48 hours after resolution of diarrhea.
* Washing hands often with soap and water for 30 seconds, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet.
* Cleaning frequently touched surfaces (toys, doorknobs, etc.), especially if someone is sick.
* Avoiding close contact (such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups) with people that have HFMD.
* Teaching children to sneeze and cough into the arm or shoulder, not the hand.
* Use disposable gloves and change your clothes after cleaning up diarrhea or vomit. Place soiled items in a sealed plastic bag in the trash.