

Coxsackie

Coxsackie, or Hand-foot-and-mouth disease, is a mild contagious viral illness that usually affects infants and children younger than 5 years old. However, it can sometimes occur in adults. The virus usually starts with a fever, reduced appetite, and a sore throat. One or two days after the fever starts, painful sores can develop in the mouth. The virus is most frequently seen in the summer and fall. Despite its scary name, this illness is generally mild.

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease often causes a rash of painful, blister-like lesions on the soles of the feet. Rashes appear differently depending on skin tone.

Some people, especially young children, may become dehydrated if they are not able to swallow enough liquids because of painful mouth sores.

Causes: Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by viruses that belong to the Enterovirus genus (group), including polioviruses, coxsackieviruses, echoviruses, and enteroviruses. Coxsackievirus A16 is the most common cause of hand, foot, and mouth disease in the United States, but other coxsackieviruses can also cause the illness.

The viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease can be found in an infected person's:

- nose and throat secretions (*such as saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus*),
- blister fluid, and
- feces (stool).

An infected person may spread the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease to another person through:

- close personal contact,
- the air (*through coughing or sneezing*),
- contact with feces,
- contact with contaminated objects and surfaces.

Generally, a person with hand, foot, and mouth disease is most contagious during the first week of illness. People can sometimes be contagious for days or weeks after symptoms go away. Some people, especially adults, may not develop any symptoms, but they can still spread the virus to others.

There is no vaccine to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease, but a person can lower their risk of being infected by:

- Washing hands often with soap and water, especially after changing diapers and using the toilet.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys.
- Avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with people with hand, foot, and mouth disease.

Although there is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease, here are some ways to relieve symptoms:

- Taking over-the-counter medications to relieve pain and fever (*Caution: Aspirin should not be given to children.*)
- Using mouthwashes or sprays that numb mouth pain

People who are concerned about their symptoms should contact their health care provider.

Returning to school: always talk with your healthcare provider if you are not sure when you should return to work or school.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013), students may return to school when other exclusion criteria such as fever and behavior changes are resolved. If a child does not feel well enough to participate due to discomfort from sores in mouth or other areas your healthcare provider should be contacted for recommendations on how best to control the discomfort.

Excluding children from the group setting does not reduce disease transmission as some children may shed the virus even when not recognizably ill and the virus may be shed for weeks. Good cough and sneeze etiquette as well as good hand hygiene is the best way to reduce transmission (Aronson, S & Schope, T, 2013, *Managing Infections Diseases in Child Care and Schools*)

For more information, click on the following links:

- [CDC on Coxsackie Virus](#)