

Hand, foot and mouth disease

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a common viral disease of the skin and mucous membranes caused by enteroviruses. What are symptoms that could occur?

- Fever
- Reduced appetite
- Sore throat
- Small, blister-like, painful sores appear in the mouth, backs of hands, palms, tops of feet and soles. They are not itchy.

How is it spread?

- Hand, foot and mouth disease is spread person-to-person by direct contact with nose or throat discharges or stool of infected person.
- It is most contagious during the first week of the illness.
- The usual period from infection to onset of symptoms is three to seven days.
- It is not transmitted to or from pets or other animals
- The disease mainly occurs in children between 6 months and 4 years of age.
- Virus can stay in the body after the symptoms are gone, which means the disease can still be spread.

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation
- Treatment is aimed at relief of symptoms.

How can it be prevented?

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, and sharing utensils with infected people.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs

Should the sick individual be isolated?

- The spread of infection is extremely difficult to prevent and the condition is harmless. Although most individuals are contagious from two days before to two days after the rash, avoidance of other children is unnecessary unless a fever is present or there are sores in the mouth.

When can the individual return to the general population?

- Temperature must be below 100 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 24 hours without medication.
- No sores are present in the mouth

Should facilities do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended on commonly touched surfaces.

For more information, call the Genesee County Health Department at (810) 257-1017.