

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease



What is Hand, Foot and Mouth?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a common viral illness, caused by the coxsackie virus

What is the incubation period?

The incubation period is three to five days.

It is infectious immediately before and during the acute stage of the illness, and perhaps longer as the virus may be present in the faeces for weeks.

What are the symptoms?

The onset of the disease generally presents as a fever, malaise, sore mouth and development of a rash. Mouth lesions appear on the inside surfaces of the cheeks, gums and on the sides of the tongue. Raised pink spots that develop into blisters which may persist for seven to ten days, can also occur as a rash, especially on the palms, fingers, soles and occasionally on the buttocks.

The disease is self limiting and more common in summer and early autumn, mainly in children under ten years of age, but adult cases are not unusual. The disease frequently occurs in outbreaks in groups of children in a nursery school for example.

How is it spread?

The virus is spread by direct contact with nasal and throat secretions or faeces of the infected person. The virus can also be transmitted by aerosol spread, i.e. coughing and sneezing. Coughing and sneezing are also likely to contaminate hands which, if not washed thoroughly, may transmit infection.

Preventing spread of the disease

Whilst the individual is unwell, children should be kept away from school/nursery. However, there is no need to keep away from school/nursery until the last lesion has disappeared providing the child is otherwise well.

A good standard of hand, personal and food hygiene should be maintained and care taken when handling articles contaminated with respiratory secretions or faeces, i.e. handkerchiefs, tissues, nappies etc.. Hands should be washed after contact with any of the above. These, of course, are measures which should be encouraged at all times to prevent this and many other infections.

**For further information
please contact your
local infection control
nurse**