



## Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease Fact Sheet (Coxsackie virus)

### **What is hand, foot and mouth disease?**

Hand, foot and mouth disease is an infection caused by a Coxsackie virus. It usually occurs during the time school is in session.

### **Who gets hand, foot and mouth disease?**

Anyone can get hand, foot, and mouth disease.

### **How is the virus spread?**

The virus is spread by the secretions in the throat or in the feces (stool). Covering the mouth with disposable tissues when sneezing or coughing and washing hands after handling soiled tissues or changing diapers is the best way to stop the spread of the bacteria.

### **What are the symptoms of hand, foot and mouth disease?**

The major symptom is small sores or lesions in the mouth, on the hands, and on the feet. The lesions can look like the beginning of chickenpox. A low grade fever can also occur. Many adults do not develop symptoms after they are infected.

### **How soon after infection do symptoms appear?**

The symptoms usually start 2 to 5 days after infection.

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### **How long can an infected person carry the Coxsackie virus?**

The Coxsackie virus may be found in the throat of an infected person for 2 weeks (even if there are no lesions in the mouth) and in the stool for 1 month after infection. Infected persons who do not appear to be ill may also spread the virus.

### **How is hand, foot and mouth disease diagnosed?**

Most cases are diagnosed by clinical symptoms only.

### **What is the treatment for Coxsackie infections?**

There is usually no treatment for hand, foot and mouth disease.

### **Should an infected person be excluded from school or work?**

No.

### **What precautions should pregnant women take?**

Pregnant women should carefully wash their hands after handling wet diapers or having contact with urine or saliva. Pregnant women working in childcare centers should not kiss babies or young children on the mouth. Hugging is OK. Pregnant women should ask their doctor about Coxsackie virus infections.

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### What can be done to stop the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease?

Good handwashing is the best way to prevent infection with the Coxsackie virus. Healthcare workers should wear disposable gloves when handling sheets or clothes soiled with the feces or urine of persons who are ill.

*For further information, contact the Oklahoma City-County Health Department (405) 425-4437*

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