

# Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

## DESCRIPTION

- small, painful ulcers in the mouth
- small blisters or red spots located on the palms and soles, and on the webs between the fingers and toes
- sometimes, small blisters or red spots on the buttocks
- low-grade fever between 100 and 102 degrees F (37.8 and 38.9 degrees C)
- mainly occurs in children age 6 months to 4 years.

## CAUSE

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is always caused by the Coxsackie A-16 virus. It has no relationship to hoof and mouth disease of cattle.

## EXPECTED COURSE

The fever and discomfort are usually gone by day 3 or 4. The mouth ulcers resolve in 7 days, but the rash on the hands and feet can last 10 days. The only complication seen with any frequency is dehydration from refusing fluids.

## HOME CARE

### 1. "Magic mouthwash" for pain relief

Mix 1/2 teaspoon antacid solution (such as Maalox or Mylanta) with 1/2 teaspoon diphenhydramine solution (liquid Benedryl). Apply some of this solution to the inside of the lips and mouth before feeding, up to six times a day. Children over age 4 can use 1 teaspoon of this solution to swish and spit out.

### 2. Diet

Offer a soft diet. Cold drinks, milkshakes, Popsicles, and sherbet are good choices. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods.

### 3. Medication

Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen for severe mouth pain or fever over 102 degrees F (38.9 degrees C).

#### 4. **Contagiousness**

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is quite contagious. Usually some of your child's playmates will develop it at about the same time. The incubation period after contact is 3 to to 6 days. Because the spread of infection is extremely difficult to prevent and the condition is harmless, these children do not need to be isolated. They can return to day care or school when the fever returns to normal. While most children are contagious from 2 days before to 2 days after the rash, avoiding other children is unnecessary.

#### **CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY IF:**

- Your child has not urinated for more than 8 hours.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

#### **CALL YOUR CHILD'S PHYSICIAN DURING OFFICE HOURS IF:**

- The fever lasts more than 3 days.
- You have other concerns or questions