

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

Definition

Diagnostic Findings



Small ulcers in the mouth



A mildly painful mouth



Small water blisters or red spots located on the palms and soles and between the fingers and toes



Sometimes small blisters or red spots on the buttocks



Low grade fever (over 100° F [37.8° C])



Mainly occurs in children 6 months to 4 years of age

Cause

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is always caused by a Coxsackie A 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

Diet. Avoid giving your child citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Change to a soft diet for a few days and encourage plenty of clear fluids. Cold drinks, Popsicles, and sherbet are often well received. Have your child rinse the mouth with warm water after meals.

Fever. Acetaminophen may be given for a few days if the fever is above 102° F (39°C).

Contagiousness. Hand, foot and mouth disease is quite contagious and usually some of your child's playmates will develop it at about the same time. The incubation period after contact is 3 to 6 days. They can return to school when the fever returns to normal range.

Call Our Office...

Immediately if:



Your child has not urinated for more than 18 hours.



The neck becomes stiff.



Your child becomes confused or delirious.



Your child becomes hard to awaken completely.



Your child starts acting very sick.

During regular hours if:



Your child is not drinking much



The fever lasts more than 3 days.



The mouth pain becomes severe.



The gums become red, swollen or tender.



You feel your child is getting worse.