

**DEFINITION**

Hand, foot, mouth disease is caused by a Coxsackie A-16 virus. This virus has no relationship to the hoof/mouth disease of cattle.

The disease is characterized by small painful ulcers found usually at the back of the mouth and on the tongue. There may also be small water blisters on the palms and soles.

Most often the cases occur in children between the ages of 6 months to 4 years. There is usually a low-grade fever at the beginning of the illness, which is gone by the third to fourth day. The mouth ulcers will usually resolve in 7 days, but the blisters on the palms and soles may last up to 10 days.

**CONTAGIOUSNESS**

Hand, foot, mouth disease is very 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. Because the spread of infection is extremely difficult to prevent and the condition is harmless, these children do not need to be isolated. They may return to daycare or school when the fever returns to normal range. In general, children are most contagious from 2 days before to 2 days after the rash.

**HOME CARE****Adequate Fluid Intake.**

It is important that your child drinks enough fluids to prevent dehydration. Since the lesions are very painful, most children will stop eating. During this time, it is probably not wise to force eating regular meals. Instead, try to encourage your child to drink cold fluids, or to eat popsicles. The coolness of the fluids is usually soothing to the child. You may also try small amounts of chamomile herbal tea that is decaffeinated. After the lesions begin to heal, your child will start to eat at their own pace.

**Pain Control.** It is appropriate to give Tylenol for pain during the inflamed stage of the disease. A mixture of equal parts of Benadryl® and Maalox® (1/2 tsp of each) may be used to coat the lesions. If your child is in preschool, you may instruct him to swish the medication in his mouth before swallowing. A dosage of ¼ to ½ tsp of the Benadryl-Maalox mixture is usually appropriate for children who have the lesions. If your child is not old enough to swish and swallow, you may use a cotton swab to apply the medication on the lips and oral mucosa.

**Diet**

During the time of illness, you will need to change to a soft diet for a few days. Avoid giving your child citrus, salty, or spicy foods.

**WHEN TO CALL THE OFFICE****Immediately****972-608-0774**

- If your child does not urinate in more than 10 hours, or has a dry mouth or lips.

**Regular Hours**

- If there is fever of 101.2° for more than 3 days.
- If Tylenol or the Benadryl-Maalox solution does not control the pain.