

Hand Foot and Mouth Disease – Primarily Coxsackievirus-A16

Information for Healthcare Workers

What it is:

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is a virus that can cause sores or blisters in or on the mouth and on the hands, feet, and sometimes the buttocks and legs. They may be painful. The illness usually doesn't last more than a week or so. Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is common in children but can also occur in adults.



Cause:

Caused by a contagious virus that can be passed from one person to another through nose and throat secretions including saliva or mucus, blister fluid, or feces. You can also be exposed to the virus by: Having close personal contact with an infected person.

Signs and Symptoms:

Fever, reduced appetite, sore throat, feeling unwell. 1-2 days after fever sores can develop in the mouth small red dots at the back of the mouth blister and painful. Rash may also present on the palm of hands, knees, elbows, buttocks and genitals. Adults often show no symptoms.

Time for Symptoms to Develop:

Signs and symptoms usually appear 3-6 days after exposure to the virus (Coxsackievirus A16 or other causative enteroviruses) and last approximately one week.

Contagious Time Period:

Coxsackieviruses are most contagious during the first week of symptoms. However, viable virus microbes have been found in respiratory tracts for up to three weeks and then in feces up to eight weeks after initial infection, but during this time, the viruses are less contagious.

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Transmission:

Spread through close personal contact, airborne with coughing, and contact with feces of infected persons. Items like utensils, diaper-changing tables, and toys that come in contact with body fluids that contain the virus may also transmit them to other individuals. Although people of any age, including adults, can get infected, the majority of people with hand-foot-and-mouth infection are young children.

Work Restrictions:

- A healthcare worker **exposed** to an individual diagnosed with Hand Foot and Mouth Disease, no modifications to work practices or work restrictions.
- A healthcare worker **symptomatic** from Hand Foot and Mouth Disease shall be excluded from work until no further symptoms. Can return to work after fever is gone. Most often, this takes 2 to 3 days. If one has widespread blisters one would need to stay home until the blisters dry up, which can take up to 7 days.

Prevention:

Wash your hands with soap and water often. Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose, and mouth. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared items, such as toys and doorknobs