

# July Newsletter

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## Hand, foot, and mouth disease

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a viral syndrome often characterized by oral lesions and a rash of the hands and feet. Most cases of HFMD occur in infants and children, particularly those younger than seven years of age. HFMD usually occurs during the summer and early fall months. The disease is usually caused by the coxsackie A16 virus. A few other viruses can also cause the disease, such as enterovirus 71.

The viruses that cause HFMD are usually transmitted from person to person by the fecal-oral route, by contact with oral and respiratory secretions, and by coming into contact with vesicle fluid from the rash. The average incubation time for HFMD is three to five days.

The most common initial symptoms of HFMD are a low fever, poor appetite, and sore throat. Within one or two days of the fever, sores develop on the tongue, gums, and inside the cheeks.

Initially, these sores appear as red spots and often develop into small ulcers. It is then common for blistered rashes to appear on the



palms, fingers, soles of the feet, and occasionally on the buttocks. The fluid in these blisters contains the virus.

Symptoms typically resolve within seven to ten days. Even though symptoms typically resolve within 10 days, this virus is capable of easily spreading since it can remain in the stool for up to six weeks after infection. In most cases, viral shedding from the oral cavity lasts for less than four weeks.

The incidence of serious complications associated with HFMD is very low. One of the most common complications of HFMD is dehydration due to a reduced intake of fluids. Adequate pain control is essential to ensure that normal fluid intake continues when the oral lesions are present.



Hand hygiene is the most effective method of preventing the spread of HFMD. It is especially important to adhere strictly to hand hygiene protocols when changing diapers, since these viruses may survive in the stool for several weeks after the symptoms have resolved.

### Sources:

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