



Hawaii State Department of Health

Disease Investigation Branch

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Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a viral illness characterized by the appearance of sores inside the mouth. The sores usually appear on the inside surfaces of the cheeks and gums, and on the sides of the tongue. The sores can also appear on the hands, especially on the palms and fingers, and on the soles of the feet. This disease occurs mainly in children under 10 years of age, but it also occurs in young adults.

How do you get it?

You get the disease by direct contact with secretions from the nose and throat of infected persons. The disease can also be transmitted through exposure to the feces (solid wastes) from infected persons.

What are the symptoms?

The illness commonly begins with mild fever, sore throat, loss of appetite, and a general feeling of not being well. In the next 2 days, sores commonly appear inside the mouth and on the tongue. The illness often produces a sore throat and pain upon swallowing. In most children, but less often in infected adults, the sores are accompanied by a non-itchy rash that appears on the hands and/or feet.

When do the symptoms start?

The symptoms generally appear 3 to 6 days after being infected with the virus.

What is the treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease?

There is no specific treatment for this disease; it typically resolves on its own.

Should infected persons stay home from school or work?

Yes. In general persons should stay home from school or work as long as they have fever, malaise and diarrhea/cough/runny nose. If they get a rash (sores) persons may return to work or school after their rash is gone (skin is clean, dry, not weeping or open).

How can you keep from getting it?

Take care to wash the hands when handling or disposing of materials used by an infected person.

Where practical, reduce person-to-person contact with infected individuals.

Promote proper hand washing techniques and other hygienic measures at home or in the classroom.

For more information, see the CDC's website at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/index.html>