



HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH

What is it?

- It is a disease caused by a virus. (Not the same as foot and mouth in animals!)
- It can be caused by EV71 virus (more like to happen in the Asia-Pacific region) or by Coxsackie virus A16
- It often causes a rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.
- The rash is usually red, lumpy and may blister.
- Sores in the mouth, which may develop into ulcers.
- Often there is a high temperature, sore throat and the child feels generally unwell.
- Spread by respiratory droplets, direct contact and possibly feaco-oral route.

Who catches it?

- Anyone can catch it but children are the most likely.
- It is quite infectious affecting about 50% of the people who come into contact with the virus.

How serious is it?

- It is **usually** quite a mild infection that gets better in a few days. Antibiotics will not help as it is caused by a virus.
- Paracetamol can help control the symptoms of fever and general aches and pains.
- Plenty of fluids help prevent dehydration caused by the fever.
- Complications do happen occasionally that need urgent medical attention. So if the child becomes very unwell suddenly or you are worried seek medical advice.
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Can it be prevented?

- Frequent hand washing may help to protect against infection.
- Take extra care when changing babies nappies who have the infection.
- People may be infected and able to spread the infection whilst having no symptoms themselves.

When can the child return to school?

- **It is believed that the child is infectious for about 7 days from when the first symptoms develop, though it may be possible that they are infectious before the onset of the symptoms. May return to school after 7 days or as per doctor's instructions.**
- **It is usually a mild disease and the vast majority of children make a swift, full recovery.**
- **It may cause a risk of miscarriage to pregnant women.**
- **Affected children are to be excluded for a period of 7 days.**