

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease – Advice for Parents

What is it?

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a mild illness. It is not the same disease as foot and mouth disease which affects mainly cattle and cannot affect humans.

What are the symptoms?

The usual symptoms are a sore throat and a rash, or ulcers, in the mouth and on the hands and feet. There may also be a fever. The illness is usually mild and can even occur without any symptoms. If a rash does develop it lasts from five to ten days.

How is it spread?

The illness is passed from person to person by contact with the discharges from the nose and throat or the faeces of those with the infection. It may also be spread by direct contact with the rash. The precise way in which the illness spreads throughout communities is not known.

How can it be prevented?

There is no treatment for those with the illness and there is no vaccine to protect against it. The best way to prevent it is the practice of good personal hygiene. In order to prevent the illness spreading at school, action has been taken to keep the level of personal hygiene as high as possible. The following measures have been shown to help prevent the illness spreading at home :

- Everyone should wash their hands after every visit to the toilet and before meals.
- If it is possible, everyone should have a towel which is used by themselves only.
- Whilst the rash is present, swimming in swimming pools should be avoided.
- Used paper tissues should be disposed of carefully to prevent others handling them.

Exclusion

If children are unwell they should stay off school until they feel well, otherwise they need not be excluded from school.