

Hand,foot and mouth disease is caused by a virus.

Coxsackievirus disease also known as hand,foot and mouth disease,usually affects the inside of the mouth and the palms of the hands,fingers and soles of the feet.It is commonly caused by coxsackievirus A16(an enterovirus)and less often by other types of coxsackievirus.

Anyone can get hand,foot and mouth disease.

Young children are primarily affected,but it may be seen in adults.Most cases occur in the summer and early fall.Outbreaks may occur among groups of children especially in day care centers or nursery schools.The incubation period is usually 3-5 days.

Hand,foot and mouth disease is usually spread through person-to-person.

The virus is spread primarily from the faeces of infected person to the mouth of the next person.It is spread also by the respiratory tract from mouth or respiratory secretions by person-to-person contact and from saliva on hands and toys.Direct contact with the blisters may also spread the virus.

The symptoms are much the like a common cold rash.

The rash appears as ulcers in the mouth,on the inner cheeks,gums,sides of the tongue,and as bumps or blisters on the hands and feet and sometimes other parts of the skin.The skin rash may last for 7-10 days.

Hand,foot and mouth disease can be shed for several weeks.

People can spread the disease when they are shedding the virus.The primary means of transmission is from the faeces.The virus can be shed for several weeks after the onset of infection.The virus is also shed from the mouth and throat when a person has cold like symptoms.The virus has also been found in the fluid from the skin blisters.Greatest contamination is during the active phase stage of the illness when people are feeling ill.

There is no specific treatment for the virus that causes hand,foot and mouth disease.

Help prevent and control the spread of hand,foot and mouth disease by:

- *Washing hands well especially after going to the bathroom,changing nappies and handling nappies or other stool-soiled material.
- *Covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- *Washing toys and other work surfaces that have saliva on them.
- *Children should be excluded from child care or school settings if there is a fever and or ulcers in the mouth,that is when the child may be feeling ill.
- * If blister lesions are open and weeping,children should be excluded from child care setting until the blisters are dried and crusted.