

Guidelines for Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) Outbreaks



Define the outbreak:

Outbreak Definition: Three or more cases of HFMD within one week at the same facility

Case Definition: *Confirmed case:* Tiny blisters in two or more body sites (palms, soles, mouth, or buttocks) and laboratory confirmed enterovirus by PCR or culture; or epidemiological link to a confirmed case

Probable case: Tiny blisters in two or more body sites (palms, soles, mouth, or buttocks) and physician diagnosed HFMD

Suspect case: Tiny blisters in two or more body sites (palms, soles, mouth, or buttocks) and pending laboratory or physician confirmation

Incubation Period: 3 to 6 days

Communicability: Most contagious for one week after symptom onset. Virus will shed for several weeks thereafter. Respiratory shedding is usually limited to one week or less. Virus is shed in feces and respiratory secretions and can survive on inanimate objects.

Signs and Symptoms:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Diarrhea
- Runny nose
- Painful mouth sores that may interfere with eating and drinking
- Tiny blisters (vesicles) lasting up to one week on any or all of these sites: palms, soles, mouth, buttocks
- The child may be 'cranky' or 'fussy.'

When you have an outbreak:

1. Report the outbreak to the local health department immediately
2. Confirm the diagnosis with the child's physician.
3. Local health department will provide further instructions on outbreak management
4. Outbreaks of HFMD are usually benign and self-limited. Contact health department if more serious illness occurs or complications are reported.

To help control the spread of infection:

1. Teach children and caregivers to cover mouths and noses when coughing or sneezing with a disposable tissue followed by proper hand washing
2. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet, and before and after caring for someone who is sick.
3. Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys. Make sure your disinfectant is registered with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a detergent-disinfectant or a hospital grade disinfectant.
4. Discourage sharing eating utensils or cups in the daycare. Avoid contact with saliva and respiratory secretions.
5. **Exclusion:**
 - a. Symptomatic children do not have to be excluded unless:
 - i. The childcare staff determine they cannot adequately care for symptomatic children without compromising the care and safety of others in the facility. Excessive drooling may prove to be difficult to manage in the childcare setting.
 - ii. The child meets facility-defined exclusion criteria (such as fever).
 - b. Readmit excluded children when the exclusion criteria have resolved.

REMEMBER: Outbreaks are immediately reportable to your local health department!