HAND, FOOT, MOUTH DISEASE - FACT SHEET

DEFINITION:
• Hand, Foot and Mouth disease is a common illness of infants and children under age 10 years. Very rare in adults.
• It has absolutely nothing to do with Hoof and Mouth disease of cattle.
• It is a viral infection with rash and fever. It is not a dangerous disease.
• It is more common during summer than winter months.
• It is diagnosed when a doctor looks at a child and decides the rash looks like Hand Foot Mouth Disease. Doctors do NOT generally use laboratory tests to determine if their diagnosis is correct.

CAUSE:
Hand, foot mouth disease is caused by a class of viruses called “enteroviruses”, and the most common enterovirus that causes these symptoms is coxsackievirus A16.

CHARACTERISTICS:
A. Initial Symptoms
• mild fever,
• poor appetite,
• malaise (“feeling sick”),
• frequently also sore throat
• At this stage, one cannot tell it is Hand Foot Mouth Disease.

B. Later Symptoms (within first 2 days)
• Tender sores may develop in mouth
• Mouth sores begin as small red spots that blister and then often become ulcers.
• Usual locations for mouth sores are on the tongue, gums, and inside of the cheeks.
• Skin rash may also develop
• Flat or raised red spots, some with blisters and not itchy; Usually located on palms of the hands and soles of feet, but may appear on the buttocks.
• Often, only rash or only mouth ulcers.
• Most children recover within 7 – 10 days.

MODE OF TRANSMISSION & CONTROL
• It is moderately contagious.
• Spread by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, fluid from blisters, or the stool of infected persons.
• Most contagious during the first week of the illness
• Incubation Period: After contact, it will take 3-7 days for those who are prone to the disease to show symptoms.
• It is not transmitted to or from pets, or other animals.
• Most people who get this infection will not have any symptoms at all; Younger children have more symptoms.
• You cannot get this disease twice from exact same virus. But, another enterovirus can cause similar symptoms.

HOME & SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
• There is no treatment for this disease. The disease takes its course and then goes away by itself.
• Medications may be taken to alleviate fever and discomfort (e.g., Tylenol / Acetaminophen); Cold foods (popsicles) may make mouth sores feel better.
• Exclude students from school if they:
  o Have fever
  o Feel too ill to attend school
  o Blisters that are in the mouth are accompanied by drooling
  o The sores on the student’s hands are wet or “weeping”
  o Stools are too loose to be contained.
• Good hand washing technique
• Remind students to avoid close contact (e.g., kissing, sharing utensils)
• Remind custodians to clean surfaces contaminated with drool or stool.