



# PEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE UNLIMITED

## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

### DEFINITION

#### Diagnostic Findings

- Small ulcers in the mouth
- A mildly painful mouth
- Small water blisters or red spots located on the palms and soles and between the fingers and toes
- Five or fewer blisters per extremity
- Sometimes, small blisters or red spots on the buttocks
- Low-grade fever (over 100° F [37.8° C])
- Mainly occurs in children 6 months to 4 years of age

#### Cause

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is always caused by a Coxsackie A virus. It has no relationship to hoof and mouth disease of the cattle.

#### Expected Course

The fever and discomfort are usually gone by day 3 or 4. The mouth ulcers resolve in 7 days, but the rash on the hands and feet can last 10 days. The only complication seen with any frequency is dehydration from refusing fluids.

### HOME CARE

**Diet.** Avoid giving your child citrus, salty or spicy foods. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Change to a soft diet for a few days and encourage plenty of clear fluids. Cold drinks, Popsicles, and sherbert are often well received. Have your child rinse the mouth with warm water after meals.

**Fever.** Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen may be given for a few days if the fever is above 102° F (39° C).

**Contagiousness.** Hand, foot, and mouth disease is quite contagious and usually some of your child's playmates will develop it at about the same time. The incubation period after contact is 3 to 6 days. Because the spread of infection is extremely difficult to prevent and the condition is harmless, these children do not need to be isolated. They can return to school when the fever returns to normal range.

### CALL OUR OFFICE

IMMEDIATELY if

- Your child has not urinated for more than 8 hours.
- The neck becomes stiff.
- Your child becomes confused or delirious.
- Your child becomes hard to awaken completely.
- Your child starts acting very sick.

During regular hours if

- Your child is not drinking much.
- The fever lasts more than 3 days.
- The mouth pain becomes severe.
- The gums become red, swollen, or tender.
- You feel your child is getting worse.
- You have other concerns or questions.