

What Child Care Providers Should Know About...

# Hand-Foot-and-Mouth Disease (Coxsackie Virus A16)

## What Is It?

Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is a common and mild childhood illness caused by a virus called coxsackie virus A16.

## What Are the Symptoms?

In many people, infection with the virus causes mild or no symptoms. Symptoms include sores in the mouth followed by a rash of tiny painful blisters on the hands and feet. Symptoms may also include mild fever, sore throat and stomach ache. The fluid in the blisters contains the virus, and symptoms may last for seven to ten days. The infection usually goes away without any serious complications.

## Who Gets It and How?

This viral illness easily spreads among children through direct contact with saliva, from blisters in the mouth, the fluid from blisters on the hands and feet, or through the infected person's stool (bowel movement). Outbreaks in child care facilities usually happen with an increased number of cases in the community, and are most common in the summer and fall.

## When Should People with this Illness Be Excluded?

Children with hand-foot-and-mouth disease do not need to stay home as long as they are feeling well enough to participate.

Exclusion may not prevent additional cases. Since the virus may be present in the stool for weeks after the symptoms have disappeared, children will have been exposed before the symptoms appeared, and many children will have no symptoms.

Children with hand-foot-and-mouth disease usually do not need treatment and will get better on their own within a week.

## How Can I Limit the Spread of Hand-Foot-and-Mouth Disease?

- Follow strict hand washing and personal hygiene procedures. See the Health and Safety Note on *Personal Hygiene: Habits Which Reduce the Spread of Disease*.

- Always wash hands, especially after using the bathroom, diapering or assisting the child in the bathroom, and before eating or handling food.
- Wash and disinfect all articles contaminated with stool or mucus.
- If an outbreak of hand-foot-and-mouth disease occurs in the child care setting:
- Notify parents and staff members.
- Make sure that all children and adults use good hand-washing techniques.

## Where Should I Report It?

Parents should be notified so they can be aware of hand-foot-and-mouth symptoms.