

ADVISORY– HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is a common, self-limiting but highly contagious viral disease that usually affects infants and children under 5 years old. However, older children and adults may also be affected. It is caused by viruses from the Enterovirus genus, most commonly the Coxsackievirus.

Mode of Transmission

Spreads through contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, or other secretions of infected persons, or after touching contaminated objects.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Malaise and loss of appetite
- Red blister-like lesions around or inside the mouth, on the palms, soles, hands, feet, and sometimes the buttocks.

Treatment

No specific treatment is available. Only symptomatic treatment, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, is given for fever and discomfort. Signs and symptoms usually disappear within 7–10 days.

⚠ One should not give aspirin to children for viral infections, as it can lead to Reye's syndrome.

Prevention and Control

- Practise hand hygiene at home. Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Avoid sharing cups, towels, and utensils. Disinfect premises and all infected materials.
- Avoid close contact, such as hugging and kissing an infected child.
- Disinfect surfaces that people frequently touch.
- Check for symptoms of HFMD to prevent its spread. Parents must inform their child's class teacher if diagnosed. This helps staff and other parents watch for symptoms.
- Parents should not send their child to school until rashes have healed completely and the child has had no fever for at least the past 24 hours (typically 7–10 days from symptom onset).
- Any child with a rash must present a medical prescription from a doctor stating that they are not contagious if re-joining school before the contagious period ends (7 days from symptom onset).