

ALLEGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Office Administration

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Bioterrorism Preparedness

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Personal Health

(269) 673-5413



Communicable Disease

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Environmental Health

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Resource Recovery

(269) 673-5415

HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

What is hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD)?

Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD) is a viral illness that affects mainly infants and children. Symptoms include fever, skin rash, and red spots or sores in the mouth. HFMD is caused by several different viruses that belong to the enterovirus group.

Who is at risk of getting HFMD?

HFMD is common in infants and children under age 10, but can also affect older children, teenagers and adults. However, some people who are infected do not show symptoms.

How is hand, foot and mouth disease spread?

The disease is spread by contact with nose and throat discharges and feces of infected people.

What is the incubation time?

Symptoms of HFMD usually appear 3–7 days after initial exposure and infection.

When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?

A person with HFMD can transmit the virus through nose or throat discharges and feces during the acute stage of the illness and is most contagious during the first week of illness. The virus can continue to be transmitted in the feces perhaps as long as several weeks after the onset of infection when a person has no apparent illness.

How is HFMD treated?

HFMD is self-limiting and does not require treatment. Persons with the disease should rest and may be given medication and liquids to control fever and pain associated with the disease.

What can be done to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease?

Particular attention should be given to thorough hand washing following contact with nose and throat discharges and feces.

When is it okay to return to work/school?

School and work can be resumed when the fever is gone and related activities can be tolerated.

This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, you may contact an Allegan County nurse at 269-673-5411.