

Coxsackie A FACTSHEET

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What is Coxsackie A?

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD) is a common infection in infants and children that is commonly caused by an enterovirus. The Coxsackie A virus is one of the more common enteroviruses. Coxsackie disease/HFMD is characterized by fever, sores in the mouth, a skin rash with blisters, and frequently a sore throat. The sores in the mouth begin as small red spots that blister and may become ulcers. The skin rash (flat or raised red spots, some with blisters) develops on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The skin rash usually does not itch.

Is it contagious?

Coxsackie disease/HFMD is moderately contagious. Infection is spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, or direct contact with the stool of infected persons. A person is most contagious during the first week of the illness. Coxsackie disease/HFMD is not transmitted to or from pets or other animals.

How Soon Do Symptoms Appear?

The normal incubation period for Coxsackie disease/HFMD is 3 to 7 days. Fever is often the first symptom of the infection.

Who is at risk for Coxsackie disease/HFMD?

Everyone is susceptible to the infection. Cases of Coxsackie disease/HFMD occur worldwide, often in the summer and early autumn. Coxsackie disease/HFMD occurs mainly in children under 10 years old but adults may also be at risk. Infection results in immunity to the specific virus but a second episode may occur following infection with a different virus from the enterovirus group.

How is Coxsackie A/HFMD diagnosed?

Coxsackie disease/HFMD is one of many infections that result in mouth sores. A physician can distinguish between Coxsackie disease/HFMD and other causes of mouth sores based on the age of the patient, the pattern of symptoms reported by the patient or parent, and the appearance of the rash and sores on examination. A throat swab or stool specimen may be taken and sent to a laboratory to determine which virus caused the illness.

How is Coxsackie disease/HFMD treated?

No specific treatment is available for this or other enterovirus infections. The physician may suggest medications to provide relief from the fever, aches, or pain from the mouth ulcers.

Can Coxsackie disease/HFMD be prevented?

Preventive measures include frequent handwashing, especially after diaper changes; disinfection of contaminated surfaces by household cleaners or bleach solution, and properly washing soiled articles of clothing. Children are often excluded from child care programs, schools, or other group settings during the first few days of the illness. These measures may reduce the spread of infection, but they will not completely interrupt it.

Want more information?

Information about Coxsackie disease/HFMD and other related health topics can be found at the website www.cdc.gov. The DC Department of Health promotes the health and safety of the District residents. For additional information, please call (202) 442-9143/9371.

