

HAND, FOOT, AND MOUTH (Enteroviral vesicular exanthem)

Last Reviewed June 2006

Problem: Hand, foot, and mouth disease is caused by a Coxsackie Virus and is a common acute, self-limiting viral illness found usually in children under age 10 years. In Maine, most cases are reported in the summer months.

The disease usually manifests itself with fever, sore throat and small oral lesions on the sides of tongue, buccal surface and gums. A rash on the palms, fingers, and soles of the feet usually follows. The skin rash may be raised and contain fluid and it does not itch. Symptoms may last 7 – 10 days.

Hand Foot and Mouth Disease is transmitted by direct contact with nose and throat discharges or fecal contaminates from infected persons. The incubation period is usually three to six days. The period of communicability is during the acute stage of illness and perhaps for weeks after since the virus is also present in the stool. Palliative treatment may be provided and the child usually recovers in 7 – 10 days.

Role of the School Nurse:

- Provide education to staff, including the athletic director, and to students about the importance of good hand washing and covering mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing, as well as other preventive measures. Caregivers in day care centers should use careful hand washing techniques when toileting or diapering infants and toddlers.
- Contact the parent if disease is suspected.
- The student should be excluded from school during the acute phase when there is draining lesions from the hand or if the student is drooling, exclude with lesions in the mouth.

Resources:

CDC - <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/enterovirus/hfhf.htm>