

Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease

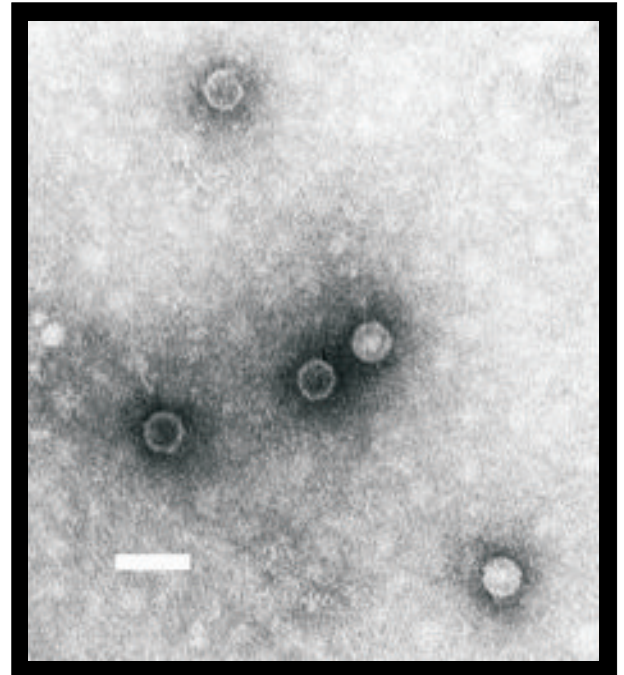
Frequently Asked Questions

What is Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease (HFMD)?

HFMD is a common childhood disease caused by a group of viruses known as the Enteroviruses, from the Picornaviridae family, the Coxsackie virus being one of the group. The disease is generally mild and self-limiting. However, on very rare occasions, HFMD can result in complications involving the heart and brain, thus causing death. During the local HFMD outbreak in 2000 and 2001, there were 7 deaths associated with HFMD.

How is HFMD spread?

HFMD is spread through direct contact with the saliva, feces or blister fluids of an infected person, and has been known to spread indirectly via contaminated articles. Young children, particularly those aged five years and below, are the most susceptible. Two-thirds of HFMD cases in Singapore involve patients below the age of five.



Coxsackie Virus - part of the virus group that causes HFMD
Source: Environmental Protection Agency, United States

What are the Symptoms of HFMD?

Common symptoms of HFMD include:

1. Fever
 2. Sore throat
 3. Ulcers in the throat, mouth and tongue
 4. Headache
 5. Loss of appetite
 6. A rash with vesicles (small blisters 3-7mm) on the hands, feet and diaper area
- *These vesicles are typically on the palm side of the hands, the sole side of the feet and very characteristic in appearance.

How are doctors treating HFMD?

The treatment for HFMD is generally conservative - doctors often only treat symptoms, if severe, as the disease itself is usually self-limiting, i.e the patient's immune system is usually able to overcome the virus.

How do we prevent the spread of HFMD?

Maintaining high standards of hygiene is our best defense against HFMD. We should observe the following hygiene practices at all times:

1. Wash your hands with soap before meals and after going to the toilet
2. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
3. Clean toys and appliances thoroughly and regularly, especially those contaminated with nasal or oral secretions, e.g. Mucus, saliva.
4. Do not share eating utensils; use a serving spoon when sharing dishes

Parents should consult a doctor immediately, if their child has fever, mouth ulcers and rashes on the palms, soles or buttocks. Children suspected to be infected with HFMD must not continue to attend sessions at childcare centres, kindergartens or school, but instead, should stay at home. Contact with other children should be avoided under post-recovery. This will prevent cross-infection and further complications.

If you have any queries, or suspect you or your child may have HFMD, please consult your doctor as soon as possible.

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