

Coxsackie (Hand, Foot & Mouth Syndrome)

Periodically, many children and a few adults come down with a viral disease called hand-foot-and-mouth syndrome. This disease, also called Hand-Foot-and-Mouth syndrome, a common cause of fever and rash during the summer and early fall. This illness is most often caused by infection with a coxsackie virus.

The natural progression of the illness is as follows:

- After an incubation period of 4-6 days following exposure to an infected person, the patient will begin to have fevers, sometimes as high as 103°-104°F, usually lasting 1-3 days, usually higher at night.
- About 2 days after the onset of fever, small sores develop inside the mouth.
- A day or so after that, you may notice small red spots on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet.
- These spots eventually turn into small blisters. Not all patients have the rash in all three locations.
- Once the illness has started it tends to last about 7 days, after which time the mouth sores and the blisters are usually gone.

There are 2 troublesome things about this viral illness. One is the fever. This should be managed by an appropriate dose of Tylenol or Motrin (see dose information in Treatment of Fever). Many times, Tylenol is only able to bring the fever down some, but not all the way to normal. Fever over 105°F deserves an office visit.

The other troublesome feature of this illness is that the sores in the mouth often make children not want to eat or drink. Be prepared for a child who simply won't eat very well for a few days. If this happens, try these ideas:

- Anbesol or other numbing ointments used for teething can be applied in small doses to the mouth sores using your finger.
- Offer only cold, bland liquids to drink. Milk is a good choice. Carbonated sodas and citrus juices will sting.
- Ice pops are good to suck on.
- Offer solid foods that are bland, soft, not spicy and not hot in temperature.
- Warm noodles with a little butter and salt, soft breads, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, pudding and Jell-O are good foods to try.
- Toast, Spaghetti sauce, potato chips and crunchy cereals are usually refused by children with Coxsackie.
- If you are concerned that your child is not drinking enough fluids and/or shows signs of dehydration (dry mouth, no tears, making much less urine), an office visit is recommended.

As for the blisters that may form on the feet and hands, leave them alone. They will heal much better if not popped. We recommend that children be kept out of day care or school for the duration of the illness.

Many parents can diagnose this illness themselves, and a visit to our office is usually not needed for confirmation. *Antibiotics do not help this condition at all.* The disease is about as contagious as the common cold. There is nothing that can be done to prevent your child from getting the illness if she has been exposed, but only a fraction of the people who are exposed will get this disease. Above all, do not be alarmed. Coxsackie goes away by itself, and it has a low rate of complications. As with any illness, you may call our office if the course of your child's illness seems in some way out of the ordinary or if you have any questions.