Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is hand, foot, and mouth disease?
Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a highly contagious disease caused by the Coxsakie virus. It usually occurs in the summer and early fall.

Who gets hand, foot, and mouth disease?
Infants and children under 10 years of age are at the greatest risk for the illness, but adult cases are not unusual. It frequently affects schools, daycare facilities, and summer camps.

How is hand, foot, and mouth disease spread?
Hand, foot, and mouth disease is spread through direct contact with the discharge from the infected person coughing or sneezing. It can also be passed through feces.

What are the symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease?
Symptoms usually appear three to five days after exposure and the illness usually lasts seven to ten days.

Symptoms include sudden onset of fever, sore throat, small white blisters in the mouth (appearing four to six days after onset of illness), loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, and sores on the palms of hands and soles of feet.

How long is hand, foot, and mouth disease contagious?
A person is able to spread the disease as long as the sores are present. The virus can stay in the feces for several weeks after the person gets better.

What is the treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease?
There is no specific treatment for hand, foot, and mouth disease since it is caused by a virus. Persons with the disease should rest and may be given medication and liquids to control fever and pain associated with the disease.

Are there complications from hand, foot, and mouth disease?
Hand, foot, and mouth disease is usually a mild disease and nearly all patients recover without medical treatment.

How can hand, foot, and mouth disease be prevented?
The disease can be prevented by avoiding direct contact with infected persons and practicing good hygiene. Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing and wash hands frequently. Infected children should be excluded from daycare or school until fever has disappeared, no new sores are appearing, and child is feeling well enough to participate in regular activities.
It is also important to practice good housekeeping when caring for someone infected with the disease. Wash or throw away clothing or other items soiled with nose and throat discharges or stool. Scrub bathroom floors and toilet seats with a solution of one part bleach to ten parts water. Don’t share eating or drinking utensils.

How do I get more information on hand, foot, and mouth disease?
Van Buren/Cass District Health Department
Phone: (269) 621-3143

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Web Site: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/enterovirus/hfhf.htm