

### **How can spread be prevented?**

- Since the virus is found in faeces, scrupulous attention must always be paid to hand washing after using the toilet.
- Whilst a person has the blisters present they should avoid sharing towels and face cloths/flannels with other people.
- Soiled clothes, bedding and towels should be washed separately on the “hot cycle” of the washing machine.

### **Can you catch it more than once?**

YES, but children who are ill during an outbreak at school or nursery are unlikely to get it again during the same outbreak.

If you require further information please contact:

NHS Lothian Health Protection Team  
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## **Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) information for schools and nurseries**

## **What is Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease?**

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a relatively common infection caused by a group of viruses that mainly affects young children (both sexes). Most cases affect children who are 10 years of age or younger, although occasionally adults can also be affected. The symptoms of HFMD tend to be milder in adults, although occasionally they can be quite severe.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Typical symptoms of hand foot and mouth disease include:

- cold-like symptoms, such as loss of appetite, cough and a moderately high temperature of around 38-39°C
- a non-itchy red rash that develops on the hand and the feet; sometimes the rash can develop into painful blisters
- painful mouth ulcers and a sore throat

These symptoms generally last for 7-10 days

## **Is it dangerous?**

NO. It is generally a mild self limiting infection and those affected will make a complete recovery.

## **Is it the same as foot and mouth disease in cows?**

NO. Foot and Mouth disease in cows is completely different.

## **How is it spread?**

The virus is spread by coughs and sneezes, and is also found in the faeces of infected children. Some children infected with the virus do not have symptoms but can still pass it to others.

## **Is there any treatment?**

- There is no specific treatment for Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease it is usually a mild and self-limiting illness.
- If a child feels unwell paracetamol (such as Calpol) maybe helpful (do not use aspirin in children under 16 years of age).
- Antibiotics and creams or ointments for the blisters are not effective. Children recover just as quickly without them.
- It's a good idea to drink plenty of fluids to keep hydrated

## **What is the incubation period?**

Symptoms start 3 – 5 days after exposure to the virus.

## **How long are children infectious?**

Children who are ill with symptoms (blisters on hands, mouth or feet) are infectious. They can carry the virus in their faeces for many weeks after they have recovered and so may continue to pass it on.

## **How long should children stay off school?**

- Children who are unwell should be kept off school until their symptoms have subsided and they are feeling better.
- Keeping children off school for longer than this is unlikely to stop the virus spreading. There may be other children in the school who appear well but are spreading the virus.