

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release:

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Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease

McCook – Summer and autumn months are typical times of the year when hand-foot-mouth disease is at its highest. Hand-foot-mouth disease is a common viral illness that most often affects children but can occur among adults.

Most infections cause little or no symptoms in children. The period from initial infection to the onset of signs and symptoms (incubation period) is from 3 to 7 days. Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Feeling of being unwell (malaise)
- Painful, red, blister-like lesions on the tongue, gums and inside of the cheeks
- A red rash, without itching but sometimes with blistering, on the palms, soles and sometimes the buttocks
- Irritability in infants and toddlers
- Loss of appetite

“We have seen some cases of hand-foot-mouth disease within the school systems we monitor weekly,” states Jamey Keen, Public Health Nurse at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “If you notice any of the symptoms, notify your physician.”

The virus is spread from person to person by contact with saliva, respiratory secretions, fluid in vesicles and feces. Hand-foot-and-mouth disease isn't related to hoof-and-mouth disease, which is an infectious viral disease found in farm animals. You can't contract hand-foot-and-mouth disease from pets or other animals, and you can't transmit it to them.

Hand-foot-mouth disease is usually a minor illness that goes away after a few days of the fever and symptoms. The most common complication of the disease is dehydration. The illness can cause sores in the mouth and throat, making swallowing painful and difficult. Watch closely to make sure your child frequently sips fluid during the course of the illness. If your child is taking in very little fluids, contact your family physician for further evaluation. Although rare, this disease can involve the brain leading to more serious complications such as meningitis or encephalitis.

Handwashing is the single most effective way to prevent infection and good hand hygiene is important. Disinfecting common areas and surfaces in child care settings, whether public or private, as well as surfaces at home will help kill the virus that causes hand-foot-mouth disease. To disinfect surfaces wash with soap and water first and then with a diluted solution of chlorine bleach, approximately ¼ cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water. All common areas, including shared items such as toys, need to be disinfected as the virus can live on these objects for days. Clean your baby's pacifiers often as well.

Because hand-foot-and mouth disease is highly contagious, people with the illness should limit their exposure of others while they have active signs and symptoms. Keep children out of child care or school until the fever is gone and mouth sores have healed. If you have the illness, stay home.

A person who suspects a severe outbreak of hand-foot-mouth disease should contact Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department at (308) 345-4223 or their family physician for assistance.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department is located at 404 West 10th, McCook (1 block north of Arby's). SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow Counties. You can also find us at www.swhealth.ne.gov and on Facebook and Twitter.

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