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HAND-FOOT-MOUTH DISEASE (Coxsackie Virus Infection)

Hand-foot-mouth disease is a fairly common childhood illness caused by a virus. Usually, it affects young children, but is sometimes seen in adolescents or adults. This is a mild illness; symptoms usually go away without treatment in 5 to 7 days. Most outbreaks occur in the summer and fall.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- The throat and tonsils develop small painful sores (ulcers).
- The hands, feet, and diaper area have a rash of very small blisters (vesicles) or red spots. The tiny blisters are usually on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet. They are tender or painful if pressed.
- Fever is common
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Poor appetite



Picture 1 It's important to give liquids.

TREATMENT

There is no particular treatment other than relief of symptoms. Antibiotics are not effective against this virus, and are not needed.

- Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) may be used for the headache, fever and sore throat.
- Aspirin should not be used in viral illnesses in children under age 12 years.
- Salt water mouth rinses (1/2 teaspoon of salt to 1 glass of warm water) may be soothing if your child is able to rinse without swallowing.
- For children over one year of age, give lots of liquids, such as water, milk, and Popsicles. Avoid fruit juices (such as orange juice) that are high in acid. These may irritate the mouth sores.
- For children under one year give breast milk, formula or Pedialyte@.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor if your child has any of these signs:

- Pain in neck or arms and legs.
- High fever (over 101°) that does not come down with medication,
- Signs of dehydration occur: Dry skin and mucus membranes; stops crying tears; has very little urine; has dry, cracked lips; acts very tired or lazy; infant's "soft spot" pulls in.
- Seizures.

PREVENTION

Avoid contact with people who have the illness. Practice strict handwashing after being in contact with infected children.