

Infectious diseases: hand-foot-and-mouth disease

3 October 2016, by From Mayo Clinic News Network, Mayo Clinic News Network

An outbreak of hand-foot-and-mouth disease has been reported in various parts of the United States.

"Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is usually a viral infection in [young children](#). Initially, they have fevers followed by sores on their hands, feet and mouths, which can sometimes be painful," says Mayo Clinic infectious diseases specialist Dr. Pritish Tosh.

Tosh says hand-foot-and-mouth is commonly caused by a coxsackievirus. While most of those who become ill are children, [young adults](#) and [older people](#) are also affected. "Most people who become infected get better," he says. "Very rarely does it require hospitalization."

This mild infection is self-limiting, meaning there are no medications to treat this infection. Tosh says, "We do not have medicines for this so good supportive care is essential, including ensuring patients have plenty of fluids." Dehydration is a common complication of the illness. It can cause sores in the mouth and throat, making swallowing painful and difficult.

"The virus that usually causes hand-foot-and-mouth disease is often spread through saliva or contact with stool. A daycare setting or in a setting where there are children is a great breeding ground for an outbreak of hand-foot-and-mouth disease," says Tosh.

Practicing good hygiene is important to reducing the risk of contracting this infection.

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APA citation: Infectious diseases: hand-foot-and-mouth disease (2016, October 3) retrieved 2 October 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-infectious-diseases-hand-foot-and-mouth-disease.html>

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