

## **HAND, FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE (ALSO KNOWN AS SINGAPORE FLU) FACT SHEET**

**Parents are kindly requested to keep their children out of school until all sores are dried up.**

### **What is hand, foot and mouth?**

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a common viral infection. It is characterized by fever, painful sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters on hands, feet and also buttocks.

### **What are the symptoms of hand, foot and mouth?**

The first symptoms of hand, foot and mouth are usually feeling generally unwell, with a poor appetite and fever.

- One to two days after fever onset, painful sores develop in the mouth. They begin as small red spots that blister and then often become ulcers. They are usually located on the tongue, gums, and inside of the cheeks.
- A non-itchy skin rash develops over 1–2 days with flat or raised red spots, some with blisters. The rash is usually located on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet; it may also appear on the buttocks and/or genitalia.

### **Is it serious?**

Hand, foot and mouth is usually a mild disease, and nearly all patients recover in 7 to 10 days without medical treatment and complications are uncommon.

Rarely, patients develop "aseptic" or viral meningitis, in which the person has fever, headache, stiff neck, or back pain, and may need to be hospitalized for a few days.

### **How does hand, foot and mouth spread?**

Hand, foot and mouth disease can spread by coughing or sneezing, and by contact with fluid from the blisters. It can also spread through stools (faeces).

Infected persons are most contagious during the first week of the illness, but the period of communicability can last for several weeks (as the virus persists in stool).

Good hygiene including proper hand washing can help prevent the spread of the virus.

### **How is hand, foot and mouth treated?**

There is no specific treatment for hand, foot and mouth disease as it is usually a mild illness where the condition generally improves after 7 – 10 days without treatment.

- Paracetamol and ibuprofen can be used to reduce a fever and treat any discomfort.
- If your child has a high temperature, make sure they drink plenty of fluid because they may be at risk of dehydration.
- Keep fingernails cut short to prevent irritating the sores.
- A salt water solution can be made to rinse out the mouth and relieve any uncomfortable mouth ulcers. Any products bought for mouth ulcers should be child specific.

**If your symptoms don't improve after a week, or suddenly worsen, contact a doctor for advice.**