

Health Advisory

“Chickenpox” is a common illness that causes an itchy rash and red spots or blisters (pox) all over the body. It is most common in children, but most people will get chickenpox at some point in their lives if they have not had the chickenpox vaccine.

Chickenpox is caused by the varicella-zoster virus. **It can spread easily.** You can get it from an infected person who sneezes, coughs, or shares food or drinks. You can also get it if you touch the fluid from a chickenpox blister. A person who has chickenpox can spread the virus even before he or she has any symptoms and is most easily spread from 2 or 3 days before the rash appears until the blisters have crusted over.

The first symptoms of chickenpox often are a fever, a headache, and a sore throat. You or your child may feel sick, tired, and not very hungry. The rash usually appears about 1 or 2 days after the first symptoms start and some children get the chickenpox rash without having a fever or other early symptoms.

It usually takes 14 to 16 days to get the symptoms of chickenpox after you have been around someone with the virus. You or your child can go back to work, school or day care when **all blisters have crusted over. This is usually about 10 days after the first symptoms start.**

“Hand, Foot, and Mouth” disease (HFMD) is a common illness of infants and children. Viruses from the group called enteroviruses cause HFMD. It is characterized by fever, sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters. HFMD begins with a mild fever, poor appetite, malaise (feeling sick), and frequently a sore throat. One or two days after the fever begins, 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. The skin rash develops over 1 or 2 days with flat or raised red spots, some with blisters. The rash does not itch, and it is usually located on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It may also appear on the buttocks. A person with HFMD may have only the rash or the mouth ulcers.

HFMD is moderately contagious. Infection is spread from person to person or by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, fluid from blisters, or the stool of infected persons. A person is most contagious during the first week of the illness. HFMD is not transmitted to or from pets or other animals.

The usual period from infection to onset of symptoms (incubation period) is 3 to 7 days. Fever is often the first symptom of HFMD.

No specific treatment is available for this or other enterovirus infections. Symptomatic treatment is given to provide relief from fever, aches, or pain from the mouth ulcers.

Specific prevention of HFMD or other non-polio enterovirus infections is not available, but the risk of infection can be lowered by good hygienic practices. Preventive measures include good hand washing techniques and thoroughly washing and disinfecting contaminated items and surfaces using diluted solution of chlorine-containing bleach.

Both diseases are contagious. If you notice your child has any of the above symptoms, please contact your physician immediately.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call me. Thank you.