

Dear members of the Shawsheen Community,

I am writing to inform you that there are students in our school who have been diagnosed with *hand, foot, and mouth disease*. I have spoken with our school physician and made the joint decision to inform the community and provide the following information:

Hand, foot, and mouth disease is typically tolerated well in adolescents and adults. It is a self-resolving virus. Treatment includes keeping hydrating and controlling the discomfort of the mouth sores with over-the-counter medication such as Tylenol or Advil. Dr. Chen stressed that hand, foot, and mouth disease is usually nothing to worry about, **but it is highly contagious**.

Please take these precautions:

- Watch your student and family members for signs of *hand, foot, and mouth disease*.
- If you think your student may have *hand, foot, and mouth disease*, call your health care provider for instructions.
- Tell us if your student has *hand, foot, and mouth disease*.

Information about hand, foot, and mouth disease:

#### *What is it?*

*Hand, foot, and mouth disease* is a common illness of infants and young children, most commonly caused by a virus called coxsackievirus. Symptoms include mild fever, poor appetite, and a sore throat. One or 2 days after the fever begins, tiny blisters develop in the mouth. A skin rash also develops over 1–2 days with flat or raised red spots, some with blisters. The rash is not itchy and is usually found on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Illness is usually mild and most people get better in 7–10 days.

*How do you catch hand, foot, and mouth disease?* It is spread when the virus from stool or saliva gets on hands or objects and then onto other people's hands and into mouths. A person is most contagious during the first week of the illness but they still can have the virus for many weeks, especially in their stool. People usually get sick 3 to 7 days after being exposed to the virus.

*How is hand, foot, and mouth disease diagnosed?* Health care providers can tell if people have *hand, foot, and mouth disease* by their symptoms. A laboratory test can be done on the throat or stool to know for sure but since the testing often takes 2–4 weeks to obtain a final answer, these tests are usually not ordered.

*How is hand, foot, and mouth disease treated?* There is no specific treatment for *hand, foot, and mouth disease* but your health care provider may suggest treatment to relieve some symptoms.

*How do you stop the spread of hand, foot, and mouth disease?*

- Always wash your hands with soap and running water after using the toilet, changing a diaper, helping a child use the toilet, and before touching food or eating. Also wash your hands after wiping or blowing noses or after touching nose, throat, or eye secretions. Babies and children need their hands washed at these times, too.
- Encourage your student not to share food, drinks, or utensils at school.

*When can your child return?* A student with *hand, foot, and mouth disease* can return to school as soon as he/she feels well enough to attend, provided they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing

medications. Otherwise, students with hand, foot, and mouth disease are not required to be excluded from school.

Please feel free to email me or call my office if you have any questions.

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