



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama Department of Public Health monitors new cases of hand, foot and mouth disease

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health asks the public to be aware that cases of the contagious viral illness called hand, foot and mouth disease are more numerous and severe than normal in Alabama this winter. No known deaths have resulted from the virus, although there have been hospitalizations and there can be some rare, severe complications.

As of Feb. 10, the ADPH has interviewed patients and collected and submitted specimens to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for individuals with febrile illnesses and rash. Based on the results of testing done by the CDC, the Coxsackie A6 virus has been identified. This specific type of virus has been identified in other countries but has not previously been associated with an outbreak in the U.S. There is no specific treatment for hand, foot and mouth disease.

“As this is a new virus for our population, we can expect more cases and are monitoring for any change in the clinical presentation,” Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer, said. “We will continue statewide surveillance on severe cases of this emerging disease and ask physicians and infection control specialists to make notifications to us.”

The public should not be unduly alarmed at this time; however, individuals diagnosed with hand, foot and mouth disease need to follow the recommendations of their health care provider to remain at home until they have no fever, all lesions have scabbed over, and no lesions have appeared for two days.

The viral disease affects the hands, feet and mouth and usually infects infants and children younger than 5 years old in summer and early autumn. There is no vaccine to protect against it, but learning about the disease and following these recommendations can reduce the risk of illness.

Hand, foot and mouth disease spreads:

- Person-to-person: Direct contact with saliva, sputum or nasal mucus from the infected person's nose and throat or with fluid in blisters, or with stool.
- Surface-to-person: Touching objects and surfaces touched by infected persons.
- Infected persons are most contagious during the first week of the illness, but can still pass the virus for weeks after symptoms have gone away.

These are the symptoms:

- Fever, rash, sores, poor appetite, a vague feeling of illness and sore throat.
- Painful sores in the mouth may blister and become ulcers.
- Skin rash, flat or raised red spots, develops over 1 to 2 days.
- Rash usually on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet and may appear on the knees, elbows, bottom or genital area.
- Dehydration may occur because of painful mouth sores.

Recommendations to protect yourself and prevent its spread:

- Wash hands with soap and water carefully and frequently, especially after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing foods or beverages.
- Disinfect surfaces and items, including toys. First wash the items with soap and water; then disinfect them with a solution of 1 tablespoon of bleach and 4 cups of water.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging or sharing eating utensils or cups with infected people.

Health care providers are being asked to notify the Alabama Department of Public Health if higher than normal numbers of cases are being hospitalized with hand, foot and mouth disease symptoms. Please call (800) 338-8374 immediately for hospitalized cases.

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