

## Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFM)

### *(Enteroviral infection)*

This is generally a mild illness, caused by a type of virus known as enterovirus. The child develops a fever and rash with blisters, which appear especially in the mouth and on the hands and feet. It is spread by direct contact with the secretions of the infected person and by coughing and sneezing. It is also found in the faeces of infected people and therefore can be spread by the faecal-oral (faeces to mouth) route. Some infected children can continue to shed the virus in their faeces for several weeks after recovery. Some people who are infected may not develop any symptoms but can still spread the virus. The person becomes infectious before their symptoms appear. Younger children are more susceptible to infection due to close contact.

**Precautions:** Frequent hand washing especially after contact with secretions from the nose or throat and after using the toilet reduces the risk of transmission.

**Exclusion:** While a pupil is unwell he/she should be kept away from school. Exclusion of a well pupil with HFM is generally not required. If evidence exists of ongoing transmission within the school exclusion of pupils until the spots have gone may be necessary. Advice should be sought from your local Department of Public Health.

**Resources:** Useful information on enteroviral infections can be found on the HPSC website at <http://www.hpsc.ie/hpsc/A-Z/Gastroenteric/EnteroviralInfections/>.