



## For Your Information

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

### Communicable Illnesses

Throughout the year, students often pick up germs, viruses, and bugs that are considered communicable illnesses by our community health agencies. The list of illnesses can be long, but things like the Common Cold, the Flu, Chicken Pox, Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease, Fifth Disease, and Head Lice are not uncommon at school.

The school takes measures to guard against the spread of communicable illness, but precautions can never completely eliminate the possibility of a child becoming sick. Our desktops, door handles, and other frequently used surfaces are regularly cleaned and disinfected to current modern standards of practice. If a child presents with obvious ill health, the school will make a home contact and may suggest that the child be picked up and brought home.

It is your (parent) responsibility to monitor the health of your child. If your child is showing ill health:

1. Keep your child at home. A day or two of rest at home may be the best option.
2. A doctor's visit may be necessary to determine the extent of the illness and the appropriate course of treatment. Please follow the doctor's directions for recovery especially regarding safe timelines for returning to school.
3. Call the school and inform us of the nature of the illness. This will help us take appropriate measures for communication and prevention.
4. Talk to your child about the importance of handwashing, covering coughs, and personal hygiene. *Clean-Cover-Contain*

Recently, there has been a reported incident of Hand-Foot-Mouth disease at our school. An information sheet, forwarded by Community Health, is attached to help answer any questions you might have. Additionally, an information sheet on head lice has been included as well.

Please understand that the school is not a Public Health agency. The school can only act on information that is disclosed by the parent. The school does not respond on rumours or allegations from the public; we respect the privacy and dignity of the individual. The school will act on direction given from Community Health.

Our school district has compiled a number of useful resources to help answer questions about student health concerns. Take some time to connect with the NLESD web-site. The health resources can be found at [www.nlesd.ca](http://www.nlesd.ca) → Students and Families → Resources → Health & Wellness.

Administration



## Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (Coxsackievirus)

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

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a viral infection that is moderately contagious. It mainly affects children under the age of 10 years but can occur at any age. It is usually a mild infection that commonly occurs in the summer and early fall in this province.

### What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms can vary from person to person and may include:
  - Fever
  - Loss of appetite
  - Sores in the mouth and throat
  - A skin rash
    - might appear on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet and buttocks
    - starts as small, flat, red dots that may turn into bumps or blisters
    - may sometimes be mistaken for chickenpox or strep throat
- Some, including most adults, may have no symptoms

### How is hand, foot and mouth disease spread?

It can be spread by direct contact with nose and throat secretions, the feces and the skin lesions of an infected person. The virus may also spread when an infected person touches objects and surfaces that are then touched by others. It spreads easily in child care facilities and where children are close together.

### How long are people infectious?

Infected persons are most infectious during the first week of the illness.

### What is the treatment for hand, foot and mouth disease?

There is no specific treatment. Since it is viral no antibiotics are required. Keep the child comfortable by treating the symptoms as follows:

- Control pain and/or fever with medication suitable for the child's age
- Offer age appropriate cool fluids frequently (avoid citrus/acidic juices)
- Offer soft foods (apple sauce, mashed potatoes, puddings, yogurt)
- Avoid products that freeze the mouth such as benzocaine (Orajel®)

Seek medical attention, if you are concerned that your child is dehydrated or the condition is worsening.

### How can we prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease?

- **Hand hygiene** is the single most important way to prevent the spread of the virus
  - Clean hands often especially after changing diapers and using the toilet
- Avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils or cups with an infected person
- Clean objects and surfaces (toys, doorknobs, etc.) that may be contaminated
- Stay at home when ill - Children can attend school or child care if the child feels well enough to take part in activities.

**If you require further information contact your local public health nurse.**

September

Dear Parents/Guardians

Head lice have been a common problem for many years. It is fairly easy to get head lice. This can happen at home, play or school. Anyone can get head lice. Head lice are mainly spread through direct head to head contact. There may be some spread from sharing hats, brushes, headphones, helmets, combs, hair accessories and other personal items.

Please take an active role in the **prevention** of head lice outbreaks by:

- checking your child's head weekly for head lice or nits
- checking your child's head daily for a week after every sleepover
- checking your child's head daily during head lice outbreaks
- talking to your child about **not** sharing hats, brushes, headphones, helmets, combs, hair accessories or other personal items
- tying back or braiding long hair

When head lice are found please take an active role in the **management** of head lice by:

- beginning treatment of head lice
- informing your child's school

If you have any questions, please contact your Public Health Nurse. She/he will advise you on what to look for and provide information on effective treatment for your family. The booklet **Managing Head Lice at Home** can be found at [www.nlesd.ca/families/doc/headlicebooklet.pdf](http://www.nlesd.ca/families/doc/headlicebooklet.pdf) and is also available from your Public Health Nurse.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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**Public Health Nurse**

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