May 13, 2014

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your child’s child care center has reported cases of Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease recently among students. Please review the following information for a description of the illness, how it is spread, and what you should do if your child develops hand, foot, and mouth disease.

**What causes hand, foot, and mouth disease?**

Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease is a common illness of infants and children caused by a virus. It occurs mainly in children under 10 years old, but may occur in older children and adults as well. It is most often seen in the summer or fall, though cases occur year-round. It is not related to foot-and-mouth disease in animals and is only transmitted person to person.

**What are the symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease?**

Symptoms of Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease include tiny blisters in the mouth and on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and buttocks. The illness may also include fever, sore throat, or cold symptoms. Mouth blisters may make eating or drinking difficult. An infected person may have none, some, or all of the symptoms.

**How serious is hand, foot, and mouth disease?**

For almost all children the illness is mild. Symptoms are the worst in the first few days but are usually

completely gone within a week. Early in the illness some children become dehydrated because of the fever and mouth pain. The Hand, Foot, and Mouth disease virus can cause more severe infection in the form of meningitis or heart infection, but this is very rare. Parents with infected children who are having severe symptoms, as well as persons with weakened immune systems who are exposed to hand, foot, and mouth disease, should contact their health care provider.

**How does a person get hand, foot, and mouth disease?**

The virus is found in the fluids from the nose, throat, skin blisters and stool of an infected child. Another child becomes infected when hands, food, or toys contaminated with the virus are put into the mouth.

**How long does it take to come down with hand, foot, and mouth disease after a person is exposed?** It usually takes 3-6 days after exposure for symptoms to begin.

**When is a person with hand, foot, and mouth disease contagious?**

A person is most contagious during the first week of illness, but the virus may be shed in the stool for weeks.

**How can I help prevent the spread of hand, foot, and mouth disease?**

• Wash hands well and often with soap and water, especially after wiping a nose or changing a diaper.

• Cover coughs and sneezes and put used tissues into a trash can.

• Clean, rinse, and sanitize toys regularly at child care and after contact with saliva.

• Prevent sharing of food, drinks, and personal items that may touch the mouth, such as eating

utensils, toothbrushes, or towels.

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

Relief of any fever or pain is the only treatment available for hand, foot, and mouth disease. To prevent

dehydration, those with fever and mouth pain should drink plenty of fluids.

**If my child develops hand, foot, and mouth disease, must s/he stay away from child care?**

No, as long as s/he does not have fever or any other symptoms that would require exclusion.