



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH,  
WELLNESS AND THE  
ENVIRONMENT**

Ministerial Building, Kingstown,  
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

**PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**

The Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment is closely monitoring the current situation of the Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) as there have been an increase of confirmed cases in educational institutions throughout the country. Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is a common viral illness among infants and children under the age of five years, but can also occur in adults.

The disease is caused by a group of viruses known as Enterovirus. The virus can be spread from person to person through:

- close personal contact, such as hugging an infected person;
- the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes;
- contact with faeces when changing diapers of an infected person and hands are not thoroughly washed after;
- touching contaminated surfaces like door knobs, then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands.

HFMD usually starts with a fever, sore throat, reduced appetite and a feeling of being unwell. One or two days after the fever starts, painful sores may develop in the mouth. They usually begin as small red spots, often in the back of the mouth that blister and can become painful. A skin rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet may also develop over one or two days as flat, red spots, sometimes with blisters. It may also appear on the knees, elbows, buttocks or genital area. Generally, a person with Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease is most contagious during the first week of illness. However, people can sometimes be contagious for days or weeks after symptoms go away. To prevent dehydration, it is important to drink enough fluids.

The Ministry is advising persons to take the following precautionary measures:

- Wash hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and water, especially after changing diapers or using the toilet, before feeding children, preparing or eating;
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing;
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize contaminated surfaces and soiled items;

- Avoid sending children to daycare and school if they are suffering from HFMD;
- Always follow safe food hygiene and water practices;

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- Avoid close contact (such as kissing and hugging, etc.) with infected people;
- Monitor children for early detection and symptoms and take those who have persistent fever and blisters on hands and feet to your healthcare provider for treatment.

Also, ensure that medical attention is sought, especially in cases where the diagnosis is unsure, the child is not eating or drinking well or if symptoms do not improve after treatment.

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