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**VIRAL ILLNESS:
HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE**

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In the last week of the summer training period, a small number of cadets at our training centre presented with a viral illness, similar to the common cold. Out of an abundance of caution, we have deemed it prudent to make you aware of the presence of this illness. It is our desire that you be better positioned to detect a case in your son or daughter at the earliest opportunity, in the unlikely event that they had become infected but were not showing signs or experiencing symptoms at the time of their departure, despite precautionary measures to prevent further such spread.

Attached to this email, you will find an information handout from the Hastings and Prince Edward County Health Unit. It provides information regarding the symptoms and treatment, as well as prevention. Again, please rest assured that this is a viral illness and management is directed at preventing further spread of the virus and supportive measures.

You do not need to pro-actively schedule an appointment with your son or daughter's health care provider. An appointment with a care provider should only be necessary in the event of an actual infection where you may need advice or assistance in managing the associated symptoms.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your health care provider.

Sincerely,

Erin White, MD CCFP
Captain
Medical Officer

Darryl W. Rolfe
Lieutenant-Colonel
Commanding Officer

FACT SHEET

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease

What is it?

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease is a mild illness caused by the coxsackievirus. It usually occurs in children under 10 years of age but adult cases are not unusual. It occurs in summer and early fall.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms occur 3-5 days after contact with the virus. There is sudden onset with fever, sore throat and small greyish-like sores in the mouth. Similar sores may appear on the hands, feet and occasionally in the diaper area. The sores may last from 4-6 days.

When is it contagious?

It is contagious when the sores first appear and during the course of illness. Virus may remain in bowel movements for several weeks.

How is it spread?

It is spread by direct contact with nose and throat secretions, such as when sneezing, coughing, kissing, and sharing dishes. It is also spread by contact with the bowel movements of infected people, ie. when diapering.

How can it be prevented?

Good personal hygiene is very important. Wash hands thoroughly:

- before eating or preparing food,
- after going to the toilet,
- after handling items soiled with bowel movements or saliva, e.g. Kleenex, diapers, clothing.

Teach children to cover their mouth when they sneeze and cough.

Wash dishes and cutlery in hot soapy water to prevent spread of infection.

Should children be kept home?

Children may return to school or day nursery if they are well enough to take part in routine activities. Sick children should be kept home.

For More Information

Contact the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit, Communicable Disease Program, at 613-966-5513 ext. 349.

Reference: Heymann, D.L. (2008). *Control of Communicable Disease Manual* (19th Ed). Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.