Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

What is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?
Hand, foot and mouth disease is a viral illness that causes tiny blisters in the mouth, on the palms of hands, and on the soles of feet. It is spread through contact with saliva, nasal secretions, blister fluid, and fecal matter of infected persons. Hand, foot, and mouth disease is mild in most children.

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 of age, but may occur in adults as well. It is most often seen in the summer or fall. It is not related to foot-and-mouth disease in animals and is only transmitted person-to-person. The virus is found in the fluids from the nose, throat, blisters and stool of an infected person. Others can become infected when hands, food, or toys contaminated with the virus are put into the mouth.

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.

How serious is Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease?
For almost all children the illness is mild. Symptoms are most severe in the first few days but are usually gone within a week. Early in the illness some children become dehydrated because of the fever and mouth pain. Only in very rare cases does the virus responsible for hand, foot, and mouth disease cause a severe illness such as viral meningitis or heart problems. Pregnant women and persons with weakened immune systems who are exposed to hand, foot, and mouth disease should contact their health care provider.

How long after exposed does a person have symptoms of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease be prevented?
It usually takes 2-10 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.

Does a child with Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease need to be excluded from school?
Children with fever should not return to school until 24 hours after the fever has been broken without the use of fever reducing medications. In addition, exclude children that are too ill to participate in school activities.
How can Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease be prevented?

• 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.

For more information about Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease please contact your health care provider or Clark County Public Health at (360) 397-8182.

https://www.clark.wa.gov/public-health/resources-healthcare-providers

http://www.k12.wa.us/HealthServices/pubdocs/InfectiousDiseaseControlGuide.pdf