

Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease Alert

To: Directors of NSW Early Childhood Education and Care Services

Dear Director,

Parts of NSW are currently experiencing an increase in reports of Hand Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD) in young children.

HFMD is a common viral infection that generally causes a relatively mild, self-limited illness. It can rarely lead to more serious complications such as viral meningitis (infection of the lining of the brain and spinal cord).

What you can do:

- Please familiarise yourself with the *Staying Healthy in Childcare* (5th Edition) factsheet on Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (attached) and make sure all of your staff are also aware.
- Reinforce the key prevention messages for Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease:
 - Advise parents to keep sick children at home until they are feeling well and all blisters have dried.
 - Make sure staff and children practise cough and sneeze etiquette and hand hygiene.

Ensure that appropriate cleaning practices are being followed. Please remember that the HFMD virus can survive in the environment, usually on surfaces such as bench tops, door handles and toys. Please ensure rigorous cleaning of the environment when there have been children with HFMD to help to break the chain of infection.

Further information:

- National Health and Medical Research Council. *Staying Healthy in Childcare* (5th Edition) www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ch55
- NSW Health *Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease* Factsheet www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/infectious/handfootmouth.html
- Your local NSW Public Health Unit - 1300 066 055
- Phone **healthdirect** on 1800 022 222 – this is a free call and nurses will provide you with more information.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jeremy McAnulty
Director, Health Protection NSW
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