



Advice on Enterovirus Infection

The causative agent:

Enteroviruses are small RNA viruses divided into 5 groups and many types, including Polioviruses (3 types), Coxsackieviruses A (23 types), Coxsackieviruses B (6 types), ECHO viruses (31 types), and Enteroviruses (4 types, EV-68 to EV-71).

Mode of Transmission:

- Enteroviruses enter the body via ingestion and they are shed in the faeces and from the oropharynx.
- Young children are its main target and reservoir but adults can also be infected.
- The viruses are readily transmitted by the faecal-oral route but can also be spread by direct contact with respiratory secretions.

Clinical Manifestation:

- Enteroviral infections are mostly mild.
- Hand-foot-mouth disease (HFMD) is one of the common presentations of enterovirus infections. It might be associated with fever lasting for 4 to 5 days, painless bubbles and rash at hand, foot and buttock. Painful ulcers are present in the mouth and around the tongue, causing difficulties in swallowing. The condition usually last 7 to 10 days.
- More severe complications are rare, but include aseptic meningitis, encephalitis, myocarditis and acute flaccid paralysis.

Preventive Measures

Personal hygiene is most important in avoiding the acquisition and transmission of Enterovirus infection.

1. Wash hands thoroughly before eating, after going to the toilet or handling nappy/ excreta.
2. Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
3. Clean thoroughly surfaces of toys and other appliances.
4. If a child is suffering from HFMD/ herpangina,
 - ✧ He/ she should stay at home, take adequate rest until the illness is over;
 - ✧ Refrain from going to school or day-care centres until the illness is over;
 - ✧ Avoid sharing of eating utensils among household members;
 - ✧ Attend Accident and Emergency Department or consult a doctor when the child has any of the following conditions:
 - ✧ Persistent high fever;
 - ✧ Repeated vomiting and poor feeding;
 - ✧ Extreme tiredness and sleepiness;
 - ✧ Irritability;
 - ✧ Abdominal distension;
 - ✧ Urine retention;
 - ✧ Shortness of breath;
 - ✧ Fast heart beat or pulse (> 160 beat/min.);
 - ✧ Unsteady gait or limb weakness;
 - ✧ Muscle jerks;
 - ✧ Abnormal eye movement;
 - ✧ Cold sweating and poor circulation.
 - ✧ Observe closely for similar symptoms or signs among other children of the household and consult a doctor as soon as possible when they arise.