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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media
From: Joel Strasz, Public Health Officer, Bay County Health Department (BCHD)
Date: October 6, 2023
Re: **Prevention and Control of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN – BCHD has noted an uptick in hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD), with 20+ cases recorded during this early fall season. BCHD encourages parents, caregivers, daycares, and schools to recognize the signs and symptoms, to understand how to protect themselves, and to take steps to prevent spreading this highly contagious disease to others.

Symptoms usually begin 3-7 days after becoming infected. Early symptoms include fever, sore throat, reduced appetite, and feeling unwell. A few days later, painful sores may develop in the mouth and a skin rash with red spots (sometimes with blisters) may develop on the palms of hands, soles of the feet, knees, elbows, and buttocks. An infected person might experience only some of these symptoms, and some people, especially adults, might have no symptoms at all.

The viruses that cause HFMD can be found in an infected person's nose and throat secretions (such as saliva, sputum, and nasal mucus), blister fluid, and stool. HFMD is spread from an infected person to others via: close personal contact; coughing and sneezing; contact with feces (including recreational water contaminated with feces); and contact with contaminated objects and surfaces. While anyone can become infected, infants and children younger than five years old are most often affected. Infections most commonly occur during the spring, summer, and fall months.

The following steps can help prevent the spread of the disease:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and soiled items, including toys
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, or sharing eating utensils with infected people
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Stay home if you or your child is feeling ill

Healthcare providers often diagnose HFMD by considering the patient's age, symptoms, and the appearance of any rash or mouth sores. Depending on the severity of illness, samples from the throat or stool might be collected for laboratory testing. There is no specific treatment for HFMD. Over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen might be used to relieve fever and pain caused by mouth sores. Most people recover within 7-10 days.

Persons diagnosed or suspected to have HFMD should stay at home if fever persists and if any open sores cannot be covered. Doing so will help control current HFMD outbreaks and prevent future spread.

CDC has additional information about HFMD ([cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth](https://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth)).

The Bay County Health Department protects and promotes a healthy community and safe environment by providing quality services through all stages of life. Local public health information and updates are available at (baycounty-mi.gov/health) and on our social media channels (@BayCountyHD).

If you have any questions, please contact the BCHD at 989-895-4009, Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm.

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