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by **Madelyn Beck**
Page 1 of 1

Hand, foot and mouth disease appears in area

Viral disease is not usually serious, but is contagious and painful

There have been a few confirmed cases of hand, foot and mouth disease in children in the area, according to St. Luke's Wood River hospital.

Hospital spokesperson Joy Prudek said the hospital has seen some cases recently and encourages people to make sure kids continue proper hand hygiene, such as frequent hand-washing.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that the disease generally affects infants and children younger than 5, and includes symptoms such as fever, reduced appetite, sore throat and painful mouth sores and rashes. Those rashes, which start as flat red spots, may blister on palms of the hands, soles of the feet, knees, elbows, buttocks and/or genital area, according to the CDC.

The agency also states that not everyone will have all the symptoms but can still pass the contagious virus along to others. While most infected people recover in a week or two, the CDC says, it still advises people to wash their hands often to stop the spread of the virus and reduce risks of infection.

The CDC adds that older children and adults can get the disease but can reduce the risk of contracting it by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds; avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands; avoiding close contact such as kissing, hugging or sharing cups or eating utensils with a sick person; and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects if someone using them is sick.

Finally, the CDC points out that hand, foot and mouth disease is not the same as foot-and-mouth disease, which commonly affects cattle, sheep and pigs.

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