



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department
Coxsackievirus
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is coxsackievirus?

- Coxsackievirus is an enterovirus that lives in the digestive tract.
- It can occur at anytime, but it is more common in warm weather

What are the signs and symptoms of coxsackievirus?

The most common symptoms:

- High Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Neck stiffness
- Sore throat
- Abdominal discomfort
- Nausea

Coxsackievirus can also cause several different symptoms that affect different body parts, including:

- **Hand, foot, and mouth disease**, a type of coxsackievirus syndrome, causes painful red blisters in the throat and on the tongue, gums, hard palate, inside of the cheeks, and the palms of hands and soles of the feet.
- **Herpangina**, an infection of the throat which causes red-ringed blisters and ulcers on the tonsils and soft palate, the fleshy back portion of the roof of the mouth.
- **Hemorrhagic conjunctivitis**, an infection that affects the whites of the eyes. Hemorrhagic conjunctivitis usually begins as eye pain, followed quickly by red, watery eyes with swelling, light sensitivity, and blurred vision.

Occasionally, coxsackieviruses cause more serious infections that may need to be treated in a hospital, including:

- **Viral Meningitis**, an infection where the tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord become swollen.
- **Encephalitis**, a brain infection
- **Myocarditis**, an infection of the heart muscle

Are coxsackieviruses contagious?

- Coxsackieviruses are very contagious.
- The virus spreads easily in group settings such as schools, daycares, or summer camps.
- Those infected are most contagious the first week they're sick.



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How are coxsackieviruses spread?

- Coxsackieviruses can be passed from person to person
- This usually happens by unwashed hands and surfaces contaminated by feces.
- The viruses can also be spread through the air when someone sneezes or coughs.
- The duration of coxsackievirus infection varies widely. For coxsackie fever without other symptoms, a child's temperature may return to normal within 24 hours, although the average fever lasts 3 to 4 days. Hand, foot, and mouth disease usually lasts for 2 or 3 days, while viral meningitis can take 3 to 7 days to clear up.

How are coxsackieviruses treated?

- Depending on the type of infection and symptoms, the doctor may prescribe medications to make your child feel more comfortable.
- Antibiotics can't be used to fight a coxsackievirus infection because they only work against bacteria.
- Acetaminophen may be given to relieve any minor aches and pains.
- Most children with a simple coxsackievirus infection recover completely after a few days without needing any treatment.
- A child who has a fever without any other symptoms should rest in bed or play quietly indoors.
- Offer plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- If a fever lasts for more than 24 hours or if your child has any symptoms of a more serious coxsackievirus infection, call your doctor.

How can I reduce my chances of becoming infected?

- Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent coxsackievirus infection.
- Keeping good personal hygiene can help reduce a person's chance of becoming infected. Some examples would be:
 - Washing your hands
 - Covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze
 - Avoid sharing personal items such as water bottles, eating utensils, etc.
- If you are in contact with someone who has coxsackievirus infection, the most effective way of preventing the spread of the disease is to wash your hands thoroughly and often.
- When you are sick, stay home!