

Viral Outbreak: College Campuses Plagued By Hand, Foot, And Mouth Disease



Hand, foot, and mouth disease is a viral infection common in young children, and is more known for shutting down preschools and daycares. However, all that has changed as the infection is now rampant on college campuses.

Health officials are saying that the unusual outbreaks striking those older are marked by a particularly nasty set of symptoms that include the usual blisters in the mouth and on the hands and feet, but also on the genitals. According to *NBC News*, health officials in several states are testing samples to determine which virus is responsible for these outbreaks. Several different viruses, including coxsackieviruses and enteroviruses such as EV-A71, can cause the symptoms of hand, foot and mouth disease.

"I have never seen this before," said Dr. Roanna Kessler, medical director of the wellness center at Johns Hopkins University's Homewood campus, which has been hit hard by the outbreak. So far, 129 students at the North Baltimore campus have been diagnosed with the illness. "In previous years we have usually seen it in only a handful of people."

So far this year, Johns Hopkins, Princeton, Dartmouth, West Virginia University, Lehigh University, Wesleyan University in Connecticut and Mars Hill University in North Carolina have all reported outbreaks. Florida State University battled an outbreak in 2016.

And health officials don't know why so many older teens and young adults are being affected, Kessler said. "We are wondering if it is a strain that people were not exposed to when they were younger," she said. Medical journals have carried reports of a mutated strain of coxsackievirus A6 causing severe outbreaks in Asia and Europe.

NBC News did mention that college campuses — where students share

bathrooms, desks, equipment and where they frequently share food and drink, embrace and kiss — are perfect grounds for spreading infectious diseases of all kinds.

According to the *Mayo Clinic*, hand, foot, and mouth disease is a mild, contagious viral infection common in young children. It is normally characterized by sores in the mouth and a rash on the hands and feet. Hand-foot-and-mouth disease is most commonly caused by a coxsackievirus. There's no specific treatment for the infection, however, frequent hand-washing and avoiding close contact with people who are infected with hand-foot-and-mouth disease may help reduce your child's or your risk of infection.

Source: <https://www.thescoopradioshow.com/viral-outbreak-college-campuses-plagued-by-hand-foot-and-mouth-disease/>

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