

## HFMD –Our experience

It all started with our pre-schooler. Just 3 years old, he came home from the child care centre one day with a slight fever. We thought he probably had viral flu. It was July, not even the usual 'HFMD season'. But being a kiasu parent, I checked his hands and saw just two little red bumps on his right palm. There was nothing on his feet and he did not complain of any pain in the mouth.

The next morning, he had more pink and red bumps, now on both hands and also on his feet. By then, I knew it was probably Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease. The family doctor confirmed the diagnosis. We promptly informed the child care centre. My husband and I were pretty worried, not only for our 3 year old, but also for our 10 month old baby boy.

We tried our best to keep the two apart in different rooms. Our flat was quite small, so this was no mean feat. We also kept all their toys and books separate. They had never shared the same towels or eating utensils, so these were not a problem. But the older one must have passed it to the younger one even before we knew it was HFMD. Two days later, our baby also developed a fever and rash. *His* rash was quite extensive – not only on the feet but also on the buttocks, arms and legs.

Thankfully, neither of them seemed to have severe mouth ulcers. They were able to eat and drink fairly normally. I kept the fever at bay with the paracetamol syrup prescribed by the doctor, and made sure they had plenty of fluids and rest.

Keeping them at home for two full weeks was truly a challenge. But we knew that it was absolutely important that they got lots of rest. We also did not want them to spread it to other kids. We certainly did not want anyone else to get HFMD from them and suffer. Being working parents, my husband and I took turns to stay home with them. We were lucky that we were both entitled to child care leave.

It was a good two weeks before they recovered. We kept both of them home until they were fully recovered and consulted the doctor before sending our

older boy back to the child care centre. We were happy to hear from the centre that there had been no other cases.

It was a difficult two weeks for us but we were so glad that the kids recovered fully and did not suffer any complications. Looking back, I am glad that I had been vigilant and checked my older son's hands and feet when he had a fever. This resulted in early diagnosis and prompt management of his symptoms. My husband and I also made absolutely sure that the boys had lots of rest at home. We are certain this contributed to their uneventful recovery and also ensured that they did not spread HFMD to others.