

## CDC Features

# Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

This disease is common in young children. It causes fever, mouth sores, and a skin rash. Wash your hands often to lessen your chances of getting sick.

## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease is Common

Hand, foot, and mouth disease, or HFMD, is a contagious illness caused by different viruses. It is common in infants and children younger than 5 years old. However, older children and adults can also get HFMD. In the United States it is more common for people to get HFMD during summer and fall.

HFMD is usually not serious, and nearly all people recover in 7 to 10 days without medical treatment. Rarely, an infected person can develop [viral meningitis](#) and may need to be hospitalized for a few days. [Other even more rare complications](#) can include paralysis, or encephalitis (brain inflammation) which can be fatal.



Symptoms of hand, foot, and mouth disease often include:

- Fever
- Reduced appetite
- Sore throat
- Feeling unwell
- Painful mouth sores that usually begin as flat red spots
- Rash of flat red spots that may blister on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, and sometimes the knees, elbows, buttocks, and/or genital area

These symptoms usually appear in stages, not all at once. Not everyone will have all of these symptoms. Some people may show no symptoms at all, but they can still pass the virus to others.

## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease Mainly Affects Young Children

HFMD mostly affects infants and children younger than 5 years old, but older children and adults can get it too. Because HFMD is caused by several different viruses, it is possible to get the disease more than once.

## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease is Contagious



People with HFMD are most contagious during the first week of their illness. However, they may sometimes remain contagious for weeks after symptoms go away. Some people, especially adults, may not develop any symptoms, but they can still spread the viruses to others. The viruses that cause HFMD can be found in an infected person's:

- Nose and throat secretions (such as saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus)
- Blister fluid
- Poop (feces)

HFMD spreads from an infected person to others from:

- Close contact, such as kissing, hugging, or sharing cups and eating utensils
- Coughing and sneezing
- Contact with poop, for example when changing a diaper
- Contact with blister fluid
- Touching objects or surfaces that have the virus on them

This is why you should always try to maintain good hygiene, like washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, to reduce your chance of getting and spreading HFMD.

## You Can Only Treat Symptoms of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

There is no specific treatment for HFMD. Fever and pain can be managed with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. It is important for people with HFMD to drink enough fluids to prevent loss of body fluids or dehydration.

### Take Steps to Lessen Your Chances of Getting Sick

You can reduce the risk of getting infected with the viruses that cause HFMD by following a few simple steps:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after changing diapers, and help young children do the same.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact such as kissing, hugging, and sharing cups and eating utensils with people who have HFMD.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.



Wash your hands and help children wash their hands to help keep from getting sick.

There is currently no vaccine in the United States to protect against the viruses that cause hand, foot, and mouth disease.

## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease is not the same as Foot-and-Mouth Disease

HFMD is often confused with foot-and-mouth disease (also called hoof-and-mouth disease), which affects cattle, sheep, and swine. Humans do not get the animal disease, and animals do not get the human disease.

### More Information

- [About Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease](#)