

Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD)

Hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) is a common viral illness which usually affects infants and children younger than five years old.

Signs and symptoms:

HFMD begins with a mild fever, poor appetite, sore throat and a general “sick” feeling. One or two days after the fever begins, painful sores develop in the mouth. They begin as small red spots that blister. The blisters are usually located on the tongue, gums, and inside of the cheeks. The skin rash develops over one to two days with flat or raised red spots, some with blisters. The rash does not itch, and it is usually located on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. It may also appear on the buttocks. A person with HFMD may have only the skin rash or the mouth ulcers.



How long is it contagious?

A person is most contagious during the first week of the illness. People can sometimes be contagious for days or weeks after symptoms go away.

How is it spread?

Infection is spread person to person by direct contact with nose and throat discharges, saliva, fluid from blisters, or the stool of infected persons. HFMD is not transmitted to or from pets or other animals.

Treatment

There is no specific treatment. Over-the-counter medications can help relieve symptoms. Children with mouth sores should be encouraged to stay hydrated.

Call Your Doctor If:

- Signs of dehydration occur
- Fever lasts more than 3 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Prevention

Specific prevention for HFMD is not available, but the risk of infection can be lowered through good hygienic practices. Preventive measures include:

- Frequent hand washing, especially after changing diapers.
- Cleaning contaminated surfaces and soiled items.
- Avoiding close contact (kissing, hugging, sharing utensils, etc.) with children with HFMD.

Return to School:

- HFMD is easily spread to others.
- However, most often, it's a mild and harmless illness.
- After contact with HFMD, children can come down with symptoms in 3-6 days.
- Can return to child care or school after the fever is gone. Most often, this takes 2 to 3 days.
- Children with widespread blisters may need to stay home until the blisters dry up. That takes about 7 days.